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# MEDITATIONS

FOR

## EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR

BY  
REV. ROGER BAXTER, S.J.



**BENEDICTINE SISTERS,  
ROYAL ST.,  
NORTH SIDE, PITTSBURG, PA**

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO  
**BENZIGER BROTHERS**

*Printers to the Holy Apostolic See*

[COPY of the COPYRIGHT to the first American edition of this work, published at Georgetown, D. C., in 1823, by Joseph Milligan, and printed by J. C. Dunn.]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, *to wit* :

[L.S.] **B**E it remembered, that on the twentieth day of March, in the forty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America, Joseph Milligan, of the said District, has deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit :

"Meditations for every day in the year, collected from different spiritual writers. First written in Latin by N. B., translated into English by E. M., in the year 1669, and now revised by Rev. R. Baxter. Every day will I bless thee : and I will praise thy name forever ; yea, forever and ever.—[Ps. cxlv. 2.]"

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."

EDMUND I. LEE,  
*Clerk of the District of Columbia.*

*ARCHBISHOPRIC OF BALTIMORE.*

---

BALTIMORE, June 24, 1884.

DEAR FATHER NEALE :

I am glad to learn that you are preparing for publication a new edition of that excellent work, "SHORT POINTS FOR MENTAL PRAYER." This precious book was originally written in 1639, and was used by Challoner, Walmsly, and other Confessors of the Faith in times of persecution. I hope the volume will have a large sale, not only among your own flock in St. Mary's County, but throughout the country.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

✦ JAMES GIBBONS,

*Archbishop of Baltimore.*

This One



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[COPY OF APPROBATIONS given to the first American edition of this work.]

## APPROBATIONES.

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EGO infrascriptus attente ac sedulo perlegi librum, cui titulus *Meditations for every day in the year, revised, etc.*, by Rev. R. Baxter, in quo nihil invenio contra fidem vel bonos mores.—Cum vero opus illud optimum mihi videtur inter id generis libros, Christifidelibus illud impense commendatum esse volo, quod nulli non Christianæ familiæ Bibliothecæ instar futurum esse existimo.

A. KOHLMANN, S. I. Censor.

WASHINGTON, 28th February, 1823.

---

LEGI librum cui titulus, *Meditations for every day in the year*, recenter quoad linguam præcipue, a Rev. R. BAXTER, S. J. recensitum, in quo tantum abest, ut quid vel fidei vel moribus contrarium repererim, quin potius omnia et orthodoxa, et pia et docta et perutilia invenio. Quapropter illum nova impressione dignissimum censeo.

FRANCISCUS DZIEROZYNSKI, S. I. Censor.

Dat. in Col. Geo. Feb. 12, 1823.

Imprim: C. NEALE, Sup.

A. M. D. G.

## PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

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THIS volume of Meditations is interesting not only from its origin, which is given at length in the Preface to the first American edition, but also from the fact that it is among the first devotional works published in this country. Even prior to its appearance here the English edition was much in use. This, in itself, adds vastly to its historical interest, since it creates, as it were, a spiritual fellowship with those pioneers of the faith who came not only to teach, but prepared to suffer. The first American edition owed its appearance to the exertions of the Rev. Roger Baxter, S.J., a man conspicuous for his learning, eloquence, and zeal in defence of the faith. Though dying at the early age of thirty-four, he was the author of at least two books which earned for him fame in the field of polemics; one, "A Series of Letters between M. B. and Quaero on the Tenets of Catholicity" appeared in 1817; the other, "The Most Important Tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, fairly explained," was published three years later, and even to this day is recognized as a standard controversial work.

This present volume contains Father Baxter's Preface

to his edition, which is certain to excite attention, as it embraces the history of the book as well as the method laid down by its author.

We have also included the Approbations given to Father Baxter's edition, and a transcript of the old copyright as likely to prove interesting to the bibliographer. We hope that the present edition, like its predecessors, will prove not only welcome, but be as productive of good to souls.

## PREFACE.

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THE following series of Meditations has been long in high repute in England. They were originally collected, a long time ago, from the best ascetical writers, which were then in existence, and there is hardly a meditation book of those days which our author has not ransacked in order to form his work. Tradition says that this little book served in an eminent degree to keep alive the spirit of their religion among the persecuted Catholics of England, for when it was first printed the days of intolerance and religious proscription had not passed away. Independently of the intrinsic merit of the book, these associations give it some degree of interest which it would not otherwise possess. This book was a particular favorite with such men as Bishops Challoner and Walmsly.

The devout contemplative, as well as the ordinary Christian, may use these Meditations with advantage.

The edition used in revising this work was printed in the year 1669. If the language had only been a little antiquated, it would have been better to have reprinted it in its original state; for we have more than one instance of good old books being revised and corrected, and spoiled. But the style was too far removed from the standard of modern language for the book to appear in it before the public, with that credit to which it is entitled. The citations from Scripture, besides, were taken

from an older English translation of the Bible, the phraseology of which differs in many respects from the present authorized translation.

The translator of 1669 (Rev. E. Mico), with some trifling changes in phraseology and orthography, gives in his preface the following account of the work: "The author of these Meditations is still living in England, of which he is a native; but his modesty prevents me from publishing his name. But, if his reputation be of any concern to the reader, I think myself bound to tell the world that his singular virtue and talents have placed him for the last twenty years in an eminent employment in his religious profession. He composed this book thirty years ago (1639), in Latin, for the benefit of a private community, in whose spiritual advancement he was interested. The work, though never before printed, has a sufficient approbation from the esteem of all those who have made use of it. Some persons of virtue, talents, and authority have procured manuscript copies of the Meditations, and make use of no other in their daily exercise of mental prayer."

The author's name has not travelled down to us in any other shape than as expressed in the title-page.

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## HOW TO MEDITATE OR PRAY MENTALLY.

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St. Augustine is quoted as saying that "any one who knows how to *pray* rightly, knows how to *live* rightly." Many opinions could be cited of holy and learned writers who attach the greatest importance to mental prayer, and for some persons think it even necessary for salvation.

DISTANT PREPARATION.—1. Avoid venial sins and be exact in all duties. 2. Practise some self-denial; guard your eyes and tongue. 3. Have a habit of recollection and union with God. 4. Be patient and kind.

NEAR PREPARATION.—1. Read the subject attentively the evening before, and fix it in the memory. 2. Picture in your imagination some object or scene connected with the subject of meditation. 3. Take a respectful and not too easy posture in meditating. We should try to come to prayer with a disengaged mind and a tranquil heart.

Begin your *Mental Prayer* by realizing the presence of God, and kiss your crucifix devoutly. *Preparatory Prayer:* O my God, I offer myself entirely to Thee, and beg of Thee to direct all the powers of my soul to know, honor, love, and serve Thee. Grant, dearest Lord, that I may practise the virtue taught by this meditation. (Recall the picture formed in imagination.)

Then carry on a conversation, as it were, with Almighty God, while you exercise your memory, under-

standing, and will (either all together or separately), asking, I. What am I going to think of? (who? where? when? why?) II. What doctrine or practical truth is to be learned from this? III. What reasons or motives for it from authority, reason, experience, or from the subject itself? (Is it becoming? is it profitable? is it agreeable? is it easy? is it necessary?) IV. How have I done in the past? (in thought, word, action; towards God, my neighbor, myself?) V. What must I do in the future? (hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly?) VI. What obstacles are in my way?—(internal, external?) VII. What means must I use?—(determine on one or two things, and no more.)

Finish your meditation by a most fervent address to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, to God the Holy Ghost; also to the Blessed Virgin, the Angels and Saints.

After Meditation, examine yourself as to the preparation for your mental prayer; as to the manner in which you have made the meditation itself (posture, attention, place, time). If it has succeeded, thank God; if it has not, find out the cause and resolve to do better next time.

# MEDITATIONS.

---

## NOVEMBER.

### FEAST OF ALL-SAINTS.

#### **Christ in the holy Eucharist as head of all the Saints.**

“O God, my God! to Thee I watch from the morning light.” (Ps. lxii. 2.)

I. Imagine yourself among the blessed angels and Saints in heaven, contemplating the face of God: and consider, 1. How great are the glory, riches, beauty, and majesty of that infinite Being. “Thousands of thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before Him.” (Dan. vii. 10.) 2. Think how great is His power; for “whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths.” (Ps. cxxxiv. 6.) 3. How great is His wisdom. “Great is our Lord, and great is His power, and of His wisdom there is no number.” (Ps. cxlvi. 5.) 4. How great, too, is His immensity; “for He is higher than the heaven; deeper than hell; longer than the earth; and broader than the sea.” (Job xi. 8.)

II. This Majesty so great, this Head of all the Saints, whose memory you celebrate this day, does not disdain



to enter the humble habitation of your soul. He even desires it Himself; for He says, "My delight is to be with the children of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) Not, indeed, that He stands in need of you, who are but dust and ashes; but because He wishes to enrich your poverty with the infinite treasures of His divinity. Reflect, therefore, who *you* are and who *He* is, and exclaim with the Royal Prophet, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 5.)

III. You must prepare your soul for the arrival of so great a guest. "Be prepared," says the prophet Amos, "to meet thy God, O Israel." (Amos iv. 12.) Wherefore, purify it first, as perfectly as you are able, not only from all mortal guilt, but also from all venial sin. "Blessed are the clean of heart," says Jesus Christ, "for they shall see God." (Matt. v. 8.) Enkindle afterwards in your soul an ardent love, that you may long retain your heavenly guest with you; for He says, "If any one love Me, we will come to him and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.)

For Meditations on week days, see page 26 and following pages.

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER ALL-SAINTS.

### Christ in the Sacrament as King.

"To-day I will dine with the king." (Esther v. 12.)

[*This and the other Meditations for the Sundays of this month are to be placed between week and week, as they come in their turn.*]

I. Jesus Christ is truly a king; the King of kings and Lord of lords. His empire does not extend over one

nation only, but over heaven and earth, angels and men. "I am appointed King by Him over Zion" (Ps. ii. 6), and not for a limited time only, as are the kings of the earth, but "forever and ever." (Ex. xv. 18.) Consequently, every service and duty, all homage and tribute, which subjects owe to their prince, are due in an eminent degree from you to your King. Examine whether you have hitherto performed your duty.

II. What would you do were some earthly prince or potentate to visit you? How carefully would you put your habitation in order, lest anything might offend the prince's eyes! How much more pains ought you to take to adorn your soul, and render it a fit habitation for the King of heaven, who condescends to visit you in the holy Eucharist! "A house is preparing, not for man," as the prophet says, "but for God." (1 Par. xxix. 1.) The women mentioned in the book of Esther, spent a whole year in preparing themselves to appear but once before king Assuerus: "For six months they were anointed with oil of myrrh, and for other six months they used certain perfumes and sweet spices." (Esther ii. 12.) How much greater care ought Christians to employ in preparing themselves to appear worthily before their Lord!

III. Princes of this world are accustomed to send before them furniture and provisions befitting their dignity, to the place which they intend to visit. Entreat Jesus Christ to do the same in your regard, to relieve your spiritual poverty. Besides, if you wish to entertain Him, as He desires, you must divest yourself of every carnal and worldly affection, and listen with all submission to His interior inspirations. "Incline thine ear and forget thy people, and thy father's house," says the royal psalmist, "and the King will greatly desire thy beauty." (Ps. xlv. 11.)

**SECOND SUNDAY AFTER ALL-SAINTS.****Christ your Father.**

**"I will arise and go to my father." (Luke xv. 17.)**

I. Almighty God, though He be infinitely powerful and rich, and in regard to whom all His creatures are as "a drop of a bucket, and as the smallest grain of a balance" (Is. xl. 15), does not disdain to be called, and to be really, our Father. He condescends in some respect to be our only Father; for Jesus Christ says, "Call none your father upon earth, for One is your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. xxiii. 9.) Christ Himself would be styled by a special title the "Father of the world to come" (Is. ix. 6), and not content with this, He assumes something more than even the affection of a mother: "If she should forget her child," He says, "yet will not I forget thee." (Is. xlix. 15.) Reflect deeply how Christ performs both of these offices.—He not only gives us a spiritual life, but He nourishes us with His own most precious body and blood.

II. Consider how, like another prodigal son, you have abandoned a father so good and so affectionate; and employed yourself in feeding swine. He is, however, still ready to receive you again, and clothe you with His costly robe; for, "as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame." (Ps. cii. 13.) He awaits you to-day in the Eucharist, and with open arms wishes to embrace you. Dispose yourself, then, to receive Him in the most worthy manner.

III. To dispose your soul in the best manner to receive

Jesus Christ, you must, in the first place, humbly beg pardon for your offences committed against Him. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." (Luke xv. 18.) Secondly, you must form a resolution of never more abandoning Him; but of imitating the perfection of your heavenly Father, according to the words of the Apostle: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children." (Eph. v. 1.) You must, therefore, with a filial confidence, represent to your heavenly Father all your weaknesses and your wants when He visits you, for if "fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to those who ask Him." (Luke xi. 13.)

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER ALL-SAINTS.

#### Christ your Brother.

"Who shall give thee to me, for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find thee without, and kiss thee." (Cant. viii. 8.)

I. To make us more sensible of His love for us, Jesus Christ has adopted not only the name of our Father, but even that of our Brother. Thus, by placing Himself on a certain equality with us (which is accustomed to be the case between brothers), he insinuates Himself in a more familiar manner into our favor, "for which reason," as St. Paul writes, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name to My brethren." (Heb. ii. 11, 12.) "Go tell My brethren," He says, "that they go into Galilee." (Matt. xxviii. 10.) Reflect what an honor it is to be the brother of so great a prince; "and if," as the wise man says, "a brother helped by a brother is like a strong city" (Prov. xviii. 19), what help

and comfort may you not expect to receive from such a brother!

II. Reflect on your cruel conduct towards your brother; for you have sold him not for twenty pieces of silver, as did the sons of Jacob their brother Joseph, but perhaps for some transient or degrading passion. Like another, and a more guilty Cain, you have murdered this innocent brother Abel of yours, by your sins, and nailed Him to a cross. Yet He has forgiven you, and now invites you to Himself, saying with Joseph, "I am Joseph, your brother; be not afraid; come to me and I will give you all the good things of Egypt, that you may eat the marrow of the land." (Gen. xlv. 4.) And what is this marrow of the land, but His own most precious body and blood, "the corn of the chosen ones, and wine which maketh virgins spring forth." (Zach. ix. 17.)

III. How ought you to meet this divine brother of yours? Imitate Jacob, who went with great presents to meet his angry brother Esau. (Gen. xxxiii. 10.) Let your presents be first "a contrite and humble heart," (Ps. l. 19), which He will never despise. Secondly, a firm determination of never sinning again "against your brother." (Gen. xlii. 21.) Thirdly, a desire of imitating His virtues, in order that, by rendering your life and conduct like His, He may appear to be what He really is, "the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29.)

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER ALL-SAINTS.

##### Christ your Master.

"The Master is come and calleth for thee." (John xi. 28.)

I. How ignorant mankind generally are in heavenly things, and in the great affair of salvation! We often "call evil good, and good evil;" we "put darkness for

light, and light for darkness." (Is. v. 20.) We often make virtues of our vices, and real virtue we consider folly. To remedy this moral defect in man, the eternal Wisdom of the Father descended from heaven to be our Master, and teach us the ways of truth. "Ye call me master and Lord," He says of Himself, "and ye say well, for so I am." (John xiii. 13.)

II. How willingly and attentively you ought to listen to this Master, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" (Col. ii. 3.) "The principal incitement to learn," says St. Ambrose, "is the excellency of the master." What master can be more excellent than Christ Himself, who being the infinite and uncreated wisdom of His Father, can neither deceive nor be deceived? "The Queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." (Matt. xii. 42.) He is ready in the Eucharist to receive you, and teach you the science of Saints, and the ways of salvation, if you present yourself with proper dispositions.

III. A due preparation is necessary on your part, if you wish to listen with profit to the lessons of this divine master. He requires that His scholars should be, first, pure from all sin; "for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin;" (Wis. i. 4.) 2. Humble and little in their own eyes; for He says to His Father, "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones;" (Matt. xi. 25.) 3. Mortified and detached from worldly things; for, "whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand the hearing? Those who are weaned from the milk, who are drawn away from the breasts." (Is. xxviii. 9.) Take care, then, that you be thus disposed and prepared to meet Him.

### **The End of Man. I.**

I. What were you a hundred years ago? Absolutely nothing; and so you would have been forever, if God had not deigned to give you an existence. He could have given to the original matter, of which you were made, an infinite number of other forms, but he was pleased to endow it with a rational soul, and give you a being among men. But for what object? Not to trifle away your time and existence in folly, not to pursue the honors and pleasures and vanities of this world, and to terminate your lives like irrational creatures. "The Lord has made all things for Himself." (Prov. xvi. 4.) It is your duty then to serve and worship Him in this world, that you may attain life everlasting in the next.

II. Consider the excellence of this end. Every other living creature is formed stooping to the earth, and is possessed of a soul that ends with its body. Man alone is raised to the sublime dignity of blessing and praising his Creator in a rational manner, and after a short life spent virtuously, of being crowned with immortal glory. With good reason holy David, full of wonder, exclaims, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?—Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and hast set Him over the works of Thy hands." (Ps. viii. 5.)

III. Consider under what obligations you are to your Creator for so great a favor; and how diligently you ought to direct your whole life to His honor and service. These ought to be the only object of your actions, and even of your thoughts. Wherefore say with the prophet, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be al-

ways in my mouth." (Ps. xxxiii. 1.) "You were born for heaven; take care that you do not degenerate from the lofty thoughts of the sons of God" (Father Azevedo), "take care that you do not carry in an upright and straight body a crooked soul;" that is, a soul unnaturally inclined to the fleeting objects of this world.

### **The End of Man. II.**

I. Since the object of your existence is to praise and serve God alone, and since the means relating to any end are good or bad only, inasmuch as they help us to attain that end or withdraw us from it; so it is evident that you ought to make use of creatures only inasmuch as they further the attainment of that object, and to avoid them when they withdraw you from it. Therefore you are not to desire riches, honor, nor the conveniences of this life, nor even health, unless they help you to praise and serve God. Wherefore the devout author of the *Imitation of Christ* says well: "Better is the humble peasant, that serves God, than the proud philosopher, who neglecting himself, meditates on the course of the heavens."

II. Examine if you possess any disordered affections for the objects mentioned above. Examine whether you be willing to suffer poverty, reproach, sickness, and even death itself, if God's glory could be increased by it. Offer yourself to your Creator, with perfect indifference to all things. Say with the prophet, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. cvii. 28); and with Christ, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi. 39.)

III. How irrationally those men live who in their actions pursue any other object than God, who misspend



their time in seeking honors, riches, and pleasures! Their conduct is as foolish as would be that of the mariner, who, wishing to sail to the north, steers towards the east—neither will arrive at the end of his journey. Of such the prophet speaks when he says, “You have sowed much and brought in little; you have eaten but have not had enough; you have drunk, but have not been filled with drink.” (Agg. i. 6.) In fine, “they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.” (Job xxi. 13.) Do not follow their example.

### **The Duty of Man towards God. I.**

I. The whole duty of man in regard to his God is comprised in *this* short sentence: “Decline from evil and do good.” (Ps. xxxvi. 27.) These are the two principal points in a Christian life; they are the two wings on which we must fly to heaven. In regard to the first branch of a Christian’s duty, the declining from evil, “the life of man upon earth” is declared in Holy Scripture to be “a continual warfare” (Job ix. 28); and Christians are termed soldiers, because it is their duty to stand on their guard, and resist the suggestions of the enemy and his temptations to sin.

II. In this warfare we are to combat sin, even to death; we must never desist, or think ourselves secure, but always stand under arms with watchful care and fear. Job, with all his virtue, examined and feared the smallest of his actions. David, though a man according to God’s own heart, did in his own emphatical language continually “sweep his spirit.” (Ps. lxxvi. 7.) The Baptist, although sanctified in his mother’s womb, led a retired and austere life, for fear “lest (as the Church

sings of him) he might stain his life with a slight fault of the tongue." St. Paul, though he was confirmed in grace and rapt to the third heaven, notwithstanding said of himself, "I so fight, not as one beating the air. But I chastise my body and bring it into subjection." (1 Cor. ix. 26.) Consider nothing then too difficult in order to avoid sin.

III. We must not only avoid the actual commission of sin, but also shun every consent of the mind to it. "Beware thou consent not to sin at any time." (Job iv. 6.) Resist every suggestion to sin, and all taking of pleasure in it; for as St. Gregory remarks, "In suggestion is the seed of sin, in delectation the nourishment, in consent the perfection or consummation." Examine what caution you employ, and what guard you place over your thoughts, words, and actions; how you avoid the occasions of danger and resist the suggestions of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Assume, with the saints of God, your spiritual arms; they are prayer and mortification. With these you will be enabled to achieve a glorious victory, and merit an immortal crown.

### **The Duty of Man towards God. II.**

I. The second branch of the Christian's duty is to labor in the exercise of good works, in order to please his Creator. Wherefore, heaven is sometimes spoken of in Holy Writ as "a valuable pearl;" at other times as a "treasure hidden in a field" (Matt. xiii. 44), which we are to discover with pains and labor, and to sell all that we have, to purchase; sometimes, again, as a prize, which we are to gain by running the race of virtue and perfection (1 Cor. ix. 24), and everywhere as the crown and reward of meritorious actions. It is your duty to per-

form the part of an industrious merchant, and by good works to "lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. vi. 20.)

II. Consider the motives which ought to induce you to labor in the pursuit and increase of virtue. 1. The will of your heavenly Father, "For this is the will of God—your sanctification." (1 Thes. iv. 3.) 2. The name of Christian, whose profession is sanctity; and therefore Christians are called by the Apostle "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) 3. The examples of Saints of both sexes, of all ages and conditions. By these examples St. Augustine frequently encouraged himself, by inquiring, "Cannot you do what such and such have done?" viz., tender youths and timorous virgins. 4. The greatness of the reward. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (Matt. v. 12.)

III. Consider the many helps which God has afforded you for your spiritual profit. 1. His divine word, communicated to you in Holy Scripture, sermons, and pious books, by which He informs your understanding and inflames your will. 2. His holy grace, which He is always ready to give you, to enable you to commence, prosecute, and complete any good work. 3. The sacraments, instituted by Christ, to give us a spiritual life, and to nourish and strengthen us in it. 4. The life, merits, and passion of our Saviour, "who is the way, and the truth, and the life." (John xiv. 6.) And, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people acceptable, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 14.) Let not these helps be thrown away on you.

## **The Sin of Lucifer and his Apostate Angels.**

Our first duty is to remove every impediment which may prevent us from attaining the end of our creation, and from serving God; and then procure a supply of virtue. Now this impediment (and it is the **only one**) is sin, the guilt and detestable nature of which you may learn by meditating the fall of Lucifer, and then that of our first parents.

I. In what a glorious state Lucifer and his companions were created! Of them are understood the words of Ezekiel [xxviii. 12], "Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; thou wast in the pleasure of the paradise of God, every precious stone was thy covering, the Sardius, the Topaz," etc. These precious ornaments were: 1. Pure spirituality, without any material combination. 2. Immortality. 3. Superior subtilty of understanding. 4. An universal knowledge of all inferior objects. 5. Strength and power superior to all other creatures. 6. Free-will and command over their own actions. 7. Eminent sanctity, resulting from the gifts of grace. 8. They were inhabitants of heaven.

II. In a moment they lost or obscured all these ornaments of nature and grace by pride, and (as all sinners do) by wishing for that which was unlawful for them. Reflect how they were immediately cast headlong into hell, without hope of mercy. Meditate deeply those words of St. Peter: "If God spared not the angels that sinned, but having cast them down into the place of torments, delivered them into the chains of hell to be tormented, the Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented." (2 Peter ii. 4.)

III. Apply these reflections to yourself. Reflect, 1. What gifts and benefits you have received from God. 2. How you have abused them, even against God Himself. 3. The sin of the angels was but one, and the sin of a moment; your sins deliberate and innumerable in thought, word, and deed. Wonder, lament, and implore mercy.

### **The Sin of our first Parents.**

I. Consider the happy state in which Almighty God created Adam and Eve. 1. They were created "to the likeness of God," and endowed with free-will. 2. They were then immortal and not subject to any misery. 3. They were supplied with abundant graces. 4. Their inferior appetites were perfectly subject to reason, in consequence of the original justice which they possessed. 5. Nothing was wanting, nothing more could be desired, in Paradise in which they dwelt. 6. From Paradise they were destined to ascend to heaven, without dying or experiencing the pains which mortals now suffer when they leave this world. How happy should we be, had they never sinned!

II. They were commanded to abstain from the fruit of a certain tree. How easy the command! But Satan induced the curious Eve, and she her husband, to transgress the divine injunction; they were immediately deprived of the ornaments of grace, and they fell under the dreadful sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii. 19.) What misfortunes has this sin entailed on mankind, and yet the transgression seems trivial!—How terrible must sin be!

III. How much severer punishments, and how much more terrible judgments, you have deserved, who have

so often and so easily offended against God's law! It would have been just had you been expelled, not as Adam was, from Paradise, but from this world. You have often offended Him, and still He waits for your repentance. "Delay not then to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for His wrath shall come on a sudden; and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." (Ecclus. v. 8.)

### **Mortal Sin.—I. The Punishment due to it.**

I. God is infinitely just in the infliction of punishment, which nevertheless is always (in the language of divines) below our deserts, whilst His rewards are above our merits. Reflect deeply, then, on the grievousness of the offence, by considering the punishment due to every sin. Enter, in imagination, into hell, and view the torments which God has prepared for even one mortal offence. Contemplate those fiery regions—those torrents of sulphur—that gnawing of teeth, and hear those shrill accents of furious agony and settled despair which the reprobate souls continually utter. Remember they are to endure forever. And "which of you," exclaims the prophet, "shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. xxxiii. 14.)

II. What a folly it would be to offend a sovereign, by whom you knew you would be cruelly tormented on the rack in consequence of your offence! How much greater folly is it to displease God, "who can destroy both body and soul in hell"! (Matt. x. 28.) And if so great a punishment be due to one mortal sin, though that is below its deserts, what an excess of torments is due to your numerous transgressions! Look back on the days of your youth, and reflect what would have become of you if God had called you from life on such and such occa-

sions. Acknowledge as many distinct favors conferred on you by God as you have committed mortal sins; they were real favors, or you would now be in hell. Say then, with holy David, "I will glorify Thy name forever, for Thy mercy is great towards me: and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell." (Ps. lxxxv. 12.)

III. How many obligations you are under to a God so patient, who has so long waited for you to do penance. Beware, lest His patience, which you have abused so often, be changed into fury. Therefore, beg pardon for what is past, and reform your conduct for the future.

### **Mortal Sin.—II. The Person Offended.**

I. The greater the dignity of the person offended, the greater is the offence; it is a greater crime to wound a father or a prince than any indifferent person. Reflect deeply, then, who it is that you have so often provoked by your sins. 1. He is the God "at whose beck the pillars of heaven tremble and dread." (Job xxvi. 11.) 2. He is omnipotent; consequently able to torment you a thousand ways, or destroy you in a moment. 3. He is everywhere present; for "His eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam." (Jer. xxxii. 19.) And yet you have been so insolent as to do those actions before His eyes which you would blush to do in the sight of men.

II. Consider the numerous favors which you have received from God; for, each one of these aggravates your crime. 1. He has created you out of nothing, preserved you like a most affectionate Father, and directed you as a guide. 2. He has drawn you out of the jaws of hell, and redeemed you with His precious blood. 3. He sanctifies you by His holy sacraments, directs you by His divine inspirations, and continually draws you by a thou-

sand ways, towards your last end. How could you find it in your heart to abuse so kind and so affectionate a benefactor and friend ! “ Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people ? Is not He thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee ?—Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee.” (Deut. xxxii. 6.)

III. How much you ought to be ashamed of your unblushing ingratitude, how much you should be afflicted for having offended your God and Saviour ! Do not abuse any longer so much goodness and such patience, but immediately commence a life of penance ; “ otherwise thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath.” (Rom. ii. 5.)

### **Mortal Sin.—III. Baseness of the Offender.**

I. It would be deemed a high offence if one prince were to strike another, but much less than if a subject were thus to insult his sovereign ; because the offence is proportioned to the inequality that exists between the offending and the offended parties. Now what greater inequality can there be than between God and yourself ? Reflect who you are, who dare insult the living God and the Lord of hosts, and in His very presence commit the most enormous crimes, as if there were no power in heaven to punish you. As to your body, you are a contemptible worm, formed of the slime of the earth. “ Man’s days are as grass ; as the flower of the field, so shall he flourish. For the wind shall pass over it and it shall not be, and one shall know its place no more ” (Ps. cii. 15). “ Your life is a vapor which appeareth for a little while.” (James iv. 15.) Never lose sight of the sentence



of God: "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii. 19.) Why should dust and ashes be proud?

II. As to your soul, what are you? Created of nothing, you would return to your original non-existence, did not God preserve you every moment. Without His co-operation you could not even move a finger. 2. You were conceived in sin, and born in sin, and there is no actual crime, however heinous, which you would not commit unless supported by divine grace. 3. In regard to knowledge, how small a portion do you possess! How many objects are entirely unknown to you! And as to power, how little can you do, and how many things lie beyond your reach!

III. What are you in comparison with all mankind? What is all the human race in comparison with the angels? And what are all the angels when compared with God? "The whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth." (Wis. xi. 23.) And yet, vile and impotent as you are, you have had the effrontery to rise up against a God of such majesty and power, and to provoke Him to indignation against you. Learn humility, do penance, and "sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." (John v. 14.)

### **Mortal Sin.—IV. Vileness of its Object.**

I. To abandon or insult a friend who deserved our affections is an offence, but to abandon him for some slight or trifling matter would be an aggravation of that offence. Now the whole world, as Isaias writes, in comparison with God, is nothing. "All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to

Him as nothing and vanity." (Is. xl. 17.) He would therefore highly insult God, who is the supreme and everlasting good, who should abandon Him only once, and that, too, to gain the whole world; but much more he who should condemn Him for trifles. He complains of this insolent folly of mankind by the mouth of the prophet: "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. ii. 12, 13.) Ponder how fitly God is termed the fountain of living water, from which flow all good things, and how suitably all the things of this world are called cisterns, which can hold no water, that is, which can afford no means of satisfying the cravings of an immortal soul. They seem at first to have something in them, but in reality they contain nothing substantial.

II. For what trifles have you forsaken God? Perhaps in order that you might please His creatures, indulge some short-lived pleasure, gratify some propensity, gain some vain object of ambition, or the like. If Esau did a foolish action by selling his birthright for a meal of food, so did Judas do a worse one by selling his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and so did the Jews do the worst action of all by preferring the miscreant and murderer Barabbas to the innocent Jesus. These you imitate when you prefer some base passion, some transient gratification or evil action, to God, and to your birthright—heaven.

III. How you ought to grieve for your past sins, and redouble your caution for the future! "In proportion to our sins," says St. Cyprian, "ought to be our grief, for we have a good Lord, and according to His greatness so also is His mercy with Him."

**Mortal Sin.—V. Its Evil Consequences.**

I. Every one naturally avoids what is injurious. Now there is nothing in the world so destructive as sin; hence Solomon says, "Sin maketh nations miserable (Prov. xiv. 34), "and he that shall offend in one, shall lose many good things." (Eccles. ix. 18.) Reflect deeply, then, on the consequences of mortal sin in this life. 1. It obscures the understanding, and by false reasoning withdraws it from the truth. 2. It alienates the will from the supreme and sovereign good, and attaches it to fictitious good, creating at the same time a disgust for spiritual things. 3. It subjects and enslaves reason to animal appetite. 4. It depraves all the senses. 5. It deprives man of the friendship and protection of God. 6. It robs him of habitual grace and all the ornaments of virtue, and from a child of God converts him into a slave of the devil—from an object of delight into an object of detestation.

II. In the next life, 1. Mortal sin deprives man of the vision of God, and of those joys "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) 2. It excludes him from the blessed company of Saints and angels forever. 3. It introduces him into indescribable torments, without hope of redemption. 4. It subjects him forever to the tyranny of the devil, his most cruel enemy, and associates him with the reprobate souls.

III. Add to all these considerations the reflection that every sinner tramples under foot the precious blood of Jesus Christ, shed for our transgressions; converts the gifts of God into arms against Him; and, in as much as he can, attempts the destruction of God Himself, and saddens the angels and Saints of God. Lastly, he injures

the world by his evil example, and the devil triumphs. With good reason then does Ecclesiasticus exclaim to all the children of Adam, "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent—the teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men." (Eccles. xxi. 2.) Let not this divine monitor cry out in vain.

### **Venial Sin.—I. Disposes to Mortal Sin.**

I. He who sincerely hates mortal sin must make every exertion to avoid venial transgressions, for "he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." (Ecclus. xix. 1.) Venial sin disposes to mortal sin. 1. In regard to the matter of sin; for the matter is generally of the same nature in both mortal and venial sin, and consequently when a person has formed a familiarity with the smaller matter by frequent venial sins, he easily passes to mortal guilt. 2. In consequence of the failure of our spiritual strength, which is diminished by frequent venial sins. Hence in this state we easily give way under the attacks of temptation; for "by slothfulness a building shall be brought down and through the weakness of hands the house shall drop through." (Eccles. x. 18.) 3. In consequence of the withdrawal of divine assistance, which is frequently the consequence of voluntary venial sin; for that man does not deserve much help who spares his own exertions. "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly." (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

II. What caution a man uses who has any inflammable matter in his house. He spares no exertion to prevent accidents and to ensure safety. And yet there is no substance in physical nature more inflammable than is concupiscence in moral nature. King David, the man who was "according to God's own heart," by an

incautious glance of the eye fell first into adultery and then committed murder. Guard then against the least spark, resist at the very commencement, and "dash thy little ones against the rock" (Ps. cxxxvi. 9), that is, annihilate at once the very motions of sin.

III. From slight wounds, when neglected, it frequently happens that severe indispositions ensue, and not unfrequently even death. The same happens to the soul from venial sin. Examine therefore all your actions, and discover in which you are most liable to receive spiritual wounds. Guard against them in time, and endeavor to refrain not only from evil, but, as the apostle advises, "from all appearance of evil." (1 Thes. v. 22.) No caution can be too great when eternity is at stake.

### **Venial Sin.—II. Its Evil Consequences.**

I. We ought to avoid venial sin; not only because it disposes to mortal guilt, but also in consequence of its own intrinsic deformity. St. Augustine says that venial sins are to the soul what ulcers are to the body: they deface its spiritual beauty and disfigure it in the eyes of its heavenly spouse. Those who are dressed in white clothes are cautious when they pass over muddy roads. Souls invested with habitual grace are "whiter than snow, purer than milk, fairer than the sapphire" (Lament. iv. 7.) What care then ought to be taken to preserve their purity from the least blemish, as we pass through the contaminated ways of this world.

II. There are other evils which venial sins entail, particularly if they be frequent. 1. They cool the fervor of charity, and weaken our attention to the one thing necessary. 2. They retard the soul in its progress in virtue, and press upon it "like a heavy burden." (Ps. xxxvii. 5.)

3. They lessen the merit of good works in the same manner as "dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment." (Eccles. x. 1.) 4. They are impediments to prayer, and they diminish our devotion. 5. They counteract the effects of the sacraments. 6. They give our arch-enemy a cause of triumph, whilst they displease the angels and Saints; and lastly, they force God Himself to dislike us; for of such souls He says, "I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Apoc. iii. 15, 16.)

III. From these principles it is evident that it is not lawful, even to save the whole world, to commit one venial sin. And yet how many have you committed, and why have you committed them? Although every Christian is bound to avoid them; yet those who have especially bound themselves to imitate Jesus Christ in perfection ought to shun them in a peculiar manner. God enjoins every one of His Levites "to be perfect and without spot before the Lord his God." (Deut. xviii. 13.) Examine your life and your actions, and for the future attempt to lead a spotless life, for it is a terrible thing to offend the Lord your God.

### **Venial Sin.—III. Its Punishment.**

I. Consider the words of royal David: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is righteous." (Ps. cxviii. 137.) This just Lord, however, has inflicted the most severe punishments on sins, which according to the opinions of most divines were only venial. 1. He struck Mary the sister of Moses with a leprosy (Num. xii. 10) for only lightly murmuring against her brother, notwithstanding his earnest supplication for his sister's pardon. 2. He

struck the two sons of Aaron with sudden death, in the sight of all the people, because in haste they used in their thuribles unsanctified fire; "fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them." (Lev. x. 2.) 3. He commanded a poor man to be stoned to death for having gathered a few sticks on the sabbath day. (Num. xv. 35.) Lastly, He inflicted death on Moses before he could enter the promised land, although he most ardently desired to enter it; and his fault, as the holy Fathers expounded it, was some small degree of diffidence when God commanded him to strike the rock. Compare these and other examples with your faults, and you will discover that you have deserved more severe punishments. Shudder at the idea, and repent.

II. God has ordained more severe punishments than these, for venial sin, after life is over, in purgatory. "The purgative fire," writes St. Augustine, "will be more severe than any pain whatsoever, that can be seen, felt, or even understood in this life." There, every debt which has been contracted will be exacted to the last farthing, and no satisfaction will suffice but suffering; and "which of you," exclaims Isaias, "can dwell with devouring fire!" (Is. xxxiii. 14.)

III. Since you would not consent to remain, even for a very short time, in flames, even to gain the whole world, how reasonable it is that you should begin to do penance for what is past. If through human frailty you cannot avoid every venial sin, shun at least those of greater consequence, and endeavor continually to diminish their number, in order "that the purgative fire," as St. Augustine again remarks, "may find little or nothing in you to consume."

**Death.—I. Its Certainty and Uncertainty.**

Having considered the heinousness of sin, it is now proper to apply the remedies against it, among which none are more efficacious than the meditation of the four last things, and first of death.

I. Death is absolutely inevitable and certain. "It is appointed for men once to die." (Heb. ix. 27.) Nothing is more certain, nothing can be more evident. All that have gone before us, heroes, emperors, princes, bishops, popes, have all died at last—no dignity, no power, no influence could screen them from the universal necessity of paying the debt of nature. "Thou hast appointed his bounds, which cannot be passed," says holy Job. (Job xiv. 5.) Believe, therefore, this simple but all-important and all-eloquent truth—you too must die.

II. As to time, place, manner, etc., of your death, nothing can be more uncertain. How many sudden accidents have you read of, heard of, and even witnessed! How many have been struck with the unerring shafts of death whilst they were eating, drinking, sleeping, or diverting themselves! When will your turn arrive? What if it should arrive at this moment? Are you ready? What says conscience? In consequence of this fearful uncertainty, Christ frequently and most emphatically exhorts us to be always ready. "Watch ye, therefore," He says, "for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh—at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning." (Matt. xiii. 35.)

III. We can only die once. If we die a bad death, we cannot recover ourselves; if we die well, all will be well forever. "If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Ec-



cles. xi. 3.) There will be no more time or place for repentance. Take care, then, that by leading a good life you may be always ready, and the tree fall on the right side. Consider your present state, and examine whether there be anything on your conscience which you would be sorry for on your death-bed. Impress this thought deeply on your mind, that to perish once is to be lost forever.

### **On Death.—II. How Terrible it is.**

I. Consider the miserable state of a dying man, stretched out on his death-bed, and hastening to dissolution. Reflect on the terrible pains which he will have to suffer. The sins of his past life will rush into his mind, and the recollection of his having lost so much time in vanity and trifles, of his having despised and neglected so many of God's graces, will torture his memory. He will perhaps have reason to wish for one hour more, in which to do salutary penance, when he may not obtain it because he has neglected so many. "He would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him," says holy David. (Ps. cviii. 18.) Oh, with what regret will the sinner exclaim at that awful moment, "What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?" (Wis. v. 8.)

II. Consider the sorrow which the sinner will feel at leaving the things of this world and their enjoyments. "That object," says St. Augustine, "is not abandoned without pain which is possessed with delight." In that hour, however, relations and friends, riches and enjoyments and pleasures are all to be abandoned, without the hope of recovering them. "For we brought nothing into this world," says the Apostle, "and certainly we can

carry nothing out." (1 Tim. vi. 7.) The author of Ecclesiasticus then justly exclaims, "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man who has peace in his possessions." (Ecclus. xli. 1.) Divest yourself, therefore, of worldly affections in time, that there may be nothing which you will have to leave with regret at the hour of death.

III. Consider the anguish and perplexity of mind which every one will experience at the hour of death, in consequence of his uncertainty in regard to the future. The moment in which their irrevocable doom will be pronounced is at hand, "and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." (Eccles. ix. 1.) The devil will be there to tempt you to despair. Consider what, at that moment, you would wish to have done during life, and do it, before it be too late.

### **On Death.—III. The Horror of a Corpse.**

I. What will become of the body after death—that body which you indulge and adorn with so much care and attention. 1. A dead body lies senseless and motionless; it sees nothing, it hears nothing; it cannot even shake off the worms that crawl around it. 2. It loses its color and becomes deformed; it is soon a prey to corruption, in such a manner, that the dearest friends of the deceased are struck with horror and avoid it. This horror was the cause of St. Francis Borgia's sanctity; for being obliged by his office to inspect the corpse of the queen of Spain, who had been a great beauty, and seeing her beauty so soon and so suddenly fled, and succeeded by the most loathsome corruption, he is said to have exclaimed, "How long shall we love vanity and seek after sin." (Ps. iv. 3.) "How long shall we neglect solid

truths and pursue shadows? everything moulders away at death, and joy is soon changed into tears."

II. The garments, the bed, and the habitation of the deceased are immediately changed. Instead of its former clothes, the corpse is wrapped in a winding-sheet. Instead of its usual bed, it is put into the cold ground, and a grave of a few feet long supplies the place of its former mansion. Thus it is abandoned by its best friends, and neglected by all, to become the food of worms. "For when a man shall die, he shall inherit serpents and beasts and worms." (Ecclus. x. 13.) Remember man, then, that "under thee shall the moth be strewed and worms shall be thy covering." (Isaia xiv. 11.) Oh, what a dwelling and what companions!

III. How important and necessary it is frequently to reflect on the future condition of your body, lest you should pay more attention to that which will be devoured by worms than to your soul, whose existence will be eternal. All our misfortunes proceed from a forgetfulness of death. When you see a dead body, imagine it addresses you in the words of Ecclesiasticus: "Remember my judgment; for thine also shall be so; yesterday for me, and to-day for thee." (Ecclus. xxxviii. 23.) Prepare constantly, therefore, for death; and, following the advice of the apostles, be always a dying man. "He will easily condemn all things," says St. Jerome, "who always believes himself a dying man."

### **Preparation for Death.—I. For those in Health.**

I. What diligence prudent men employ in preparation when they have to make a long voyage. They think of it long beforehand, and leave nothing to chance but attempt to have everything in readiness. We ought to

be much more solicitous in regard to our departure from this life, for it will be our final journey into everlasting happiness or eternal misery. The importance of this journey induced our Lord frequently to inculcate the necessity of being always ready. "Be ye then also ready," He says, "for at what hour ye think not the Son of man will come." (Luke xii. 40.)

II. This preparation for death consists principally in this, that at its departure, whenever that may be, the soul finds itself free from all mortal sin, and as much as possible free from all venial sin. Wherefore examine yourself and discover if there be anything on your conscience which might prevent entirely or retard your entrance into heaven were you to die this moment. Put yourself in that state, then, in which you would wish to be found at death, and labor to persevere in it; for death may call on you suddenly, and even if it do not, it is a common remark that few are mended by sickness. "The sinner," says St. Augustine, "has this punishment inflicted on him, that when he is at the point of death he is unmindful of himself; because whilst he was living he was forgetful of God." Do not, therefore, forget God during health.

III. What is most calculated to give comfort to a dying person? 1. To have suffered much for Christ, and to have undergone mortification and penance. 2. To have been devout to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, etc.—Apply yourself seriously to these things, for the time will come when you will wish to have done so. Happy was that holy man who could say on his death-bed, "I have never done my own will, neither have I ever taught any one what I did not first practise myself."

**Preparation for Death.—II. For the Sick.**

- I. Sickness is the usual warning of death. Every one should therefore most carefully foresee what will be most expedient for him, in that state, to make a secure and a happy exit from this world. He must first acknowledge that sickness and pain are sent by a most loving Father, to expiate his sin or to increase and try his virtue. "Because thou wast acceptable to God," said the angel to Tobias, "it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii. 13.) Let him therefore give God thanks for his sickness, since by it he is warned of his approaching death, and has time to prepare for it.

II. What ought a sick man to do by way of immediate preparation for death: 1. He must purify his soul from all sin, by a sincere confession (a general confession in such a case is very advantageous). 2. He must resign himself entirely to God in regard to life or death. 3. He must foresee the occasions in which he may have to suffer, either in consequence of the violence of his disease or the negligence of his attendants, and arm his mind against temptations to impatience in these cases. 4. He must procure the reading of good books. 5. He must make frequent ejaculations to Heaven. 6. He must often call to mind the sufferings of Christ. 7. He must recommend himself to the Blessed Virgin and his patron Saints. 8. He must frequently make acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition.

III. When his danger increases he must call in time for the last helps of the Church, in order that he may receive them with more devotion. After this he must dilate his heart, and long for the meeting of his heavenly spouse. "Behold the bridegroom cometh : go ye forth

to meet him." (Matt. xxv. 6.) He must, lastly, entirely surrender himself into the hand of God, repeating the words of Christ, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46); or those of David, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name." (Ps. cxli. 8.)

### **The Particular Judgment. I.**

I. Immediately after death we shall be judged, "that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. v. 10.) Ponder the terrors of this judgment. Who are the parties to be concerned in it? The Judge is infinitely wise—you cannot deceive Him; infinitely powerful—you cannot resist Him; infinitely just—you cannot bribe Him : He is supreme, and consequently from His decision you cannot appeal. Your accusers will be the devils, your arch-enemies; the witnesses, your angel guardian, and even your own conscience. Thus will your poor soul be circumstanced. You will stand, bereft of counsellors and friends, despoiled of everything which you had in the world, and accompanied by nothing but your own works. These alone, whether they have been good or evil, will accompany you to judgment. "Their works," says St. John, "follow them." (Apoc. xiv. 13.)

II. Consider the terrors of this judgment, in regard to the strict account which you must give of yourself. Your whole life will be accurately examined, every action, the most concealed, every thought, the most secret, will be brought into open view. "All things that are done God will bring into judgment" (Eccles. xii. 14), even "every idle word." (Matt. xii. 36.) The infinitely wise Judge will exact an account, not only of evil committed, but

also of neglected good. He will examine even your good actions themselves, and discover if they be accompanied with any imperfections as to intention and exactness. "I will judge justices," he says by the mouth of David. (Ps. lxxiv. 3.) And by Sophonias, "I will search Jerusalem with lamps." (i. 12.) If God judge so strictly the "justices" of the Saints, and "search" even "Jerusalem," with how much more rigor will He act towards Babylon and sinners!

III. Ask yourself this all-important question: "What shall I be able to say or produce in my defence, at that fearful moment?" Take the advice of Ecclesiasticus, "Before sickness take a medicine, and before judgment examine thyself, and thou shalt find mercy in the sight of God." (Ecclus. xviii. 20.) Whilst you have power and time, do good, and fly from evil; for this conduct alone will screen you from the terrors of judgment.

## **The Particular Judgment. II.**

I. Consider the miserable situation of a sinful soul, at the moment of judgment, if it be found wanting, and in the state of sin. For if that should be its unfortunate case, it will be completely degraded.—In the first place, it will be deprived of the gift of faith; because its actions did not correspond with its faith. 2. It will be stripped of the gift of hope; for, having hitherto neglected to adopt the means of gaining what Christians hope for, it can now hope no longer. 3. Its supernatural graces, if it had any, will be taken from it, and all its moral virtues, which it has abused. 4. Its natural knowledge will still remain, but will remain to torture it, for it will forever know and feel what it has lost and what it has gained, by sinning. 5. The character of baptism and every other

sacramental character, which it may have received, will adhere to it for its greater confusion, and enable its infidel companions to upbraid it for all eternity in the language of Scripture: "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." (Luke xiv. 30.) Lastly, all that Ezechiel foretold shall be fulfilled in its regard: "They shall strip thee of thy garments, and take away the instruments of thy glory, and shall let thee go naked and full of disgrace. (Ezech. xxiii. 26, 29.)

II. Consider the terror of the sentence which will be pronounced against the wicked: "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the exterior darkness." (Matt. xxv. 30.) Ah! wretched state! How will the poor soul feel on that occasion! The devils will instantly hurry it to the bottomless pit. Then there will be no remedy, no escape, no hope for you, as yet there is; take advantage of it therefore now, while you can.

III. Consider the happy condition of the just at that awful time. The sentence which they will hear affords sufficient subject for meditation. "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. xxv. 23.) Imagine what joy that will be, and if you aspire to it, imitate those who will deserve it.

### **The General Judgment. I.**

I. Why has God instituted a general judgment? 1. To manifest to all mankind the glory and power of the humbled Redeemer. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son" (John v. 22), and that He who appeared before all men for their salvation might also appear before them in the glorious character of universal judge, and that the wicked



may see Him whom they have crucified. 2. That the just may receive that honor and glory before all mankind, which they deserve, and the wicked meet with that confusion which they have merited; for in this world, for His own wise purposes, God frequently suffers the wicked to be exalted and permits the virtuous to be depressed.

3. That our bodies may receive reward or punishment, as they have been the instruments of virtue or of vice.

II. What terrors will precede the general judgment.

"There shall be great earthquakes and pestilences and famines and terrors from heaven." (Luke xxi. 11.)

"The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved." (Matt. xxiv. 29.)

And, as St. Peter says, "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved." (2 Peter iii. 12.)

The sea will be troubled in the most terrible manner and the trembling earth shall be all on fire.

"For behold, the day shall be kindled as a furnace," says the prophet, "and all the proud, and all who do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day which cometh shall set them on fire." (Malac. iv.

1.) Beware lest on that day you prove to be nothing but stubble.

III. The angel will go forth and sound on his trumpet

the terrible words, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" The dead will then resume their bodies; but

with what different feelings! The wicked will inveigh against their bodies, because for their gratification they have committed so many crimes.

They will exclaim to the mountains, "fall upon us, and to the hills, cover us." (Luke xxiii. 30.)

But their exclamations will be uttered in vain. At that moment sinners will wish rather to have led virtuous lives, than to have worn crowns or governed empires.

Reflect, therefore, fre-

quently on the assertion of St. Jerome, and follow the principle which dictated it: "Whether I eat, or drink, or whatever else I do, that dreadful voice is always sounding in my ears; Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." The sound was not in vain in his ears; take care it be not so in yours.

## **The General Judgment. II.**

I. The terror of this judgment will be increased at the appearance of the Judge. "And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty." (Luke xxi. 27.) Legions of angelic spirits will surround him ready to execute his decrees. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." (Matt. xxiv. 30.) Those shall mourn who have been enemies to this sign, or the cross of Christ. The Judge will be seated on a throne and His Saints will be round him. His countenance will beam with satisfaction and complacency on his faithful servants, but it will be lighted up with the fire of indignation when it is turned towards his enemies: "A swift stream of fire issued forth from before him." (Dan. vii. 10.) Who would not wish at that terrible moment to be a friend of his Almighty Judge.

II. "The angels shall go out and separate the wicked from among the just." (Matt. xiii. 49.) Dreadful, eternal separation! The just will be placed on His right, and the goats, or reprobate, on His left. Ponder deeply the untimely repentance of the wicked, for it will be too late to retract their evil deeds in presence of their Judge, and of those just souls, of whom they will say: "We have had them some time in derision and for a parable

of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honor; behold how they are numbered among the children of God and their lot is among the saints." (Wis. v. 3.) Then will be exacted that strict account of every thought, word and deed of our whole lives. Those crimes which sinners are ashamed of exposing to a confessor will then be known to the whole world. Do penance now, or you will then be covered with confusion.

III. Consider the final sentence of the Judge. He will turn to the elect, and with eyes beaming with love He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 34.) Then addressing the wicked, "Depart," He will say, "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Ponder the greatness of the reward, and then the severity of the punishment. Make your choice between them; it is now in your power, but soon it will not be so. Wherefore, while time exists, "whatever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly, neither worth, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening." (Eccles. ix, 10.)

## Hell. I.

I. Hell is the prison house of the damned, replete with every kind of misery and void of all good. Conceive the most severe torments that imagination can fancy, and they will be nothing in comparison with the torments of hell. That place, says St. John, is "a pool of fire, burning with brimstone." (Apoc. xxix. 20.) It will be, 1. A place of hideous darkness, more obscure than Egyptian darkness. 2. Excessively crowded in conse-

quence of the number of the damned. 3. Exceedingly loathsome and nauseous. 4. It will be a place, "where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job x. 22.)

II. Consider the nature of the pains suffered in hell. 1. They will be most severe and excruciating, without relaxation or respite. Hence the rich glutton could never obtain one drop of water to cool his tongue. 2. The damned will suffer every variety of torture; "Let him pass from the snow waters into excessive heat." (Job xxiv. 19.) These torments will be increased by the company which the reprobate will be always obliged to keep: devils and damned souls, odious to themselves and all around them, will be their constant companions—add to those, vipers and snakes. "He shall suck the head of the asp, and the viper's tongue shall kill him; he shall be punished for all that he did, and yet shall not be consumed." (Job xx. 16.) How horrid a thought, to dwell in such a place of woe!

III. Consider the eternal existence of these pains. Millions of years will pass away and still these torments will exist as if they were only just beginning. Alas! they will endure forever,—yes, forever. "The smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; neither have they rest day nor night." (Apoc. xiv. 11.) 1. They will be eternal, because the human soul is immortal; "They shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (Apoc. ix. 6.) 2. Because that place of torment will never cease to exist. 3. Because the reprobate will be there, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished." (Mark ix. 43.) Lastly, the decrees of God are immutable, and He will have said to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* flames." What ought you not to undergo to avoid the danger of such suffering?

**Hell. II.**

I. Consider the expression of the Wise Man: "By what things a man sinneth by the same also he is tormented." (Wis. xi. 17.) In each one of the senses by which the sinful soul has offended God it will be punished. 1. The sight will be tortured with the view of the most hideous monsters, of devils and reprobate souls. The representations of past crimes will rise up in horrid succession before it, and perhaps the guilty associates of former transgressions will be there to add to the poor soul's torment. 2. The hearing will be tortured with the sounds of blasphemy and the shrill accents of agony and despair. 3. The smell will be assailed by all the filth of hell. 4. The taste will be punished with intolerable hunger and thirst. 5. The feeling will be universally tortured over every part of the poor sinner's body; "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. xxxiii. 14.) The will, memory and understanding will also have their appropriate punishments.

II. The "pain of loss," as divines term it, will be far more severe than all these torments. The grief which we feel when we have experienced any loss is always proportionate to the object lost. The reprobate souls will (for their greater torment), know and feel too, what they have lost by their sins, viz., that happiness which is derived from the vision and enjoyment of the supreme good, the society of angels and Saints, eternal rest, peace, tranquillity and delight. How can we prevail on ourselves to forego all these, and besides to incur eternal pains, for some transitory gratification, some base, idle, short-lived pleasure? Foolish mortals, ungrateful Christians!

III. What ought to be done to avoid hell? "Avoid sin and do good." If you would not consent for the whole world to undergo, even for an hour, a very severe corporal pain, with how much more reason ought you to labor to avoid the pains of hell. This cannot be done without avoiding sin. "Let us therefore bewail our sins," as Thomas à Kempis says, "before we come to that place where our tears will be of no other avail than to increase our torments;" and let us avoid sin for the future; for sin is the fuel of hell.

### **Purgatory.—I.**

I. As hell is destined for the punishment of mortal sin, so is purgatory ordained to be the punishment of venial transgressions. In purgatory souls suffer for a time the "pain of loss" and the pains of the senses. Ponder then on their pain of loss. They are deprived of the beatific vision and the enjoyment of God, which they most ardently desire. "Hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul." (Prov. xiii. 12.) Much more is the soul afflicted when those hopes regard an enjoyment so great as is the happiness of heaven. If a high honor, a large sum of money, or any extraordinary enjoyment were promised you, think how uneasy you would be until you had gained possession of it. How great, then, must be the desire of these afflicted souls for the beatific vision, and the grief resulting from that desire! That grief is increased by the reflection that this enjoyment is delayed in consequence of their own carelessness and negligence.

II. Consider the pain of sense which the souls in purgatory experience. 1. The place of punishment is hideous and in the vicinity of hell, as most of the holy Fathers think. 2. The nature of the fire is the same as

that of hell. 3. The torments are excessive; for as St. Augustine observes, "the purgative fire is more grievous than any pain whatever that we can see, feel, or imagine in this world." 4. Although the pains of purgatory will not endure like the pains of hell, forever, yet in regard to many poor souls they will endure for a very long time; and even should the time of suffering be in itself short, it will seem to the sufferers extremely long. An hour of pain there will be far more painful than a long life of misery here. "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" (Is. xxxiii. 14.)

III. How important and how necessary it is both to avoid venial sin and satisfy fully for mortal transgressions, although confessed, and, in respect to their guilt, forgiven! "Of sin that is forgiven be not without fear." (Ecclus. v. 5.) If you do not take this timely precaution you will be in danger of suffering in purgatory, and perhaps for many years. Remember what St. Augustine wrote, "He who will not now so much as put his finger into the fire, must necessarily dread to be tormented then, even for a short time."

### **Purgatory.—II.**

I. How easy it is to sin so as to deserve the pains of purgatory! God will suffer nothing in the slightest degree criminal to pass unpunished. Considering how prone we all are to evil, and how averse to good actions, we have every reason to be on our guard even in our best actions. The sanctity and purity of our God are so perfect that He is easily offended by the negligence or ingratitude of His creatures; and whoever loves his God or his own soul, whoever pays any attention to his own best interests, will avoid even the smallest imperfection. Alas! of how many sins of this nature have you been

guilty! How justly have you deserved the pains of purgatory! Wherefore humbly ask pardon for what is past, and pray with the psalmist: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy indignation, nor chastise me in Thy wrath. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." (Ps. vi. 1, 2.)

II. Our merciful Lord has afforded us many means in this world of satisfying for our sins, and escaping the pains of purgatory. Among these means are the reception of the sacraments, the celebration or hearing of Mass, a devout application of the indulgences of the Church; then fasting, alms, prayers, mortification, and at least patience in all kinds of sufferings. God will be easily satisfied in this life, and will be soon appeased by the poor services that we can render Him. But after our time of probation in this world is over, He will exact the whole debt of punishment, even "to the last farthing." (Matt. v. 26.) Hence be careful to do as much good as you can while you may. "Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." (Ecclus. xiv. 14.)

III. Among the best means of escaping entirely, or mitigating the pains of purgatory, is to pray frequently for the dead. This kind of charity and mercy for the helpless sufferers in purgatory is most acceptable to God. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," says Jesus Christ. (Matt. v. 7.) He will Himself be merciful to those who are merciful to the souls in purgatory. Wherefore pray yourself and procure the prayers of others for them: for, "with what measure you have measured, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. vii. 2.)

NOTE.—If some days remain before Advent, for which there are no meditations appointed, some of the more interesting subjects that have been already considered can be taken again.



## FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

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### SUNDAY.

#### Christ Your Judge.

“Behold the Lord cometh with thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.” (Jude, xiv. 15.)

I. The gospel of this day tells us, that Jesus Christ is to be the judge of all mankind. We ought to dread His judgment. 1. On account of His supreme jurisdiction, from which there can be no appeal. 2. On account of the rigor of His justice; for no entreaties can affect Him, no bribes divert the course of His justice. 3. On account of His infinite knowledge, from which nothing can be concealed. 4. Because Jesus Christ will not only be the judge, but also the party offended.

II. How great would be the favor, if the judge himself should in the most friendly manner visit a criminal in his prison, and inform him of the means by which he might secure success in his trial. This favor Christ will show you this day. Receive Him, therefore, as He deserves, with love and gratitude, and now, whilst you can, endeavor by earnest prayer to gain His favor against that dreadful day on which prayers and entreaties will have no avail. That day will certainly arrive, and perhaps sooner than you expect.

III. It is your duty, then, to take care that there exist nothing in your soul which may be displeasing in the eyes of your pure Judge when He condescends to visit

you. He will search the inmost recesses of your heart. Purify it, therefore, most diligently from every imperfection. Say, with the humble prophet, "enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord" (Ps. cxlii. 2.), but rather, in the bowels of thy infinite mercy, "O orient, thou brightness of eternal light and sun of justice, come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Well, therefore, does Bæthius observe that "it is necessary to live well, since we do everything in the presence of the Judge, who sees all things." Consider this well and prepare for judgment.

#### MONDAY.

### Imitating the Life of Christ. I.

I. The Son of God descended into this world, from the bosom of His eternal Father, for two objects, as the holy Fathers unanimously assert. The first was to redeem us, and the second, to give us a model which we might imitate, and by that means become pleasing to His father. His life, then, should be the mirror of ours. Reflect on your obligations to God for having condescended to give you this model, and by that means facilitated your progress in virtue. It is much easier to imitate the actions of another than to do those actions if they are only commanded.

II. How glorious it is to follow so great an example! "It is glorious," says Ecclesiasticus, "to follow the Lord." (Ecclus. xxiii. 38.) By following the example of men, whoever they may be, you may err, because they are men, capable consequently of being themselves deceived, and of wishing to deceive others. But, by imitating the Son of God, you cannot wander astray, because He is "the way;" you cannot be deceived, because He is "the

truth ;" you cannot perish, because He is "the life." "He is the way in example," writes St. Bernard, "the truth in promise, and the life in reward." Finally, Christ commands nothing, which He has not first performed Himself. He may justly say, as Gideon did, "What ye shall see me do, do ye the same." (Judges vii. 17.)

III. How foolishly you have acted, when in your conduct you followed any other rule than that of the life of Christ. Every other rule is incorrect and vicious. "The wisdom of this world (according to which every sinner acts when he sins), is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii. 19.) Ask pardon for your past folly, and beg our Lord to admit you among the number of His followers.

## TUESDAY.

### Imitating the Life of Christ. II.

I. The followers of Christ may be divided into three classes. Some are Christians in name only ; they confess Him in words only, "but in their deeds they deny him." (Titus i. 16.) They take no pains in avoiding sin, and their actions crucify (in as much as they can), their Redeemer afresh. They are, in fact, only nominal Christians, for they do not follow Christ, but His enemy the devil. Reflect how often you have ranked in this class. Repent and amend.

II. Others follow Christ, but (like St. Peter, when his master was taken) at a great distance. This was probably the cause of Peter's fall and denial of our Lord. Persons of this second class follow Christ, but coldly. They purpose indeed to keep the commandments, but care not to aim at higher perfection, and therefore often fail even in the observance of these. When they are addressed in these words—"If thou wilt

be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me—they go away sorrowful,” like the young man in the gospel (Matt. xix. 21.), and reject the Divine admonition. Examine whether or not you be one of these.

III. The third class consists of those who, with a generosity of mind and steadiness of resolution, attempt to follow Christ, even to the cross, “through honor and dishonor, through infamy and good fame.” (2. Cor. vi. 8.) With St. Paul, “they count everything as dung that they may gain Christ.” (Phil. iii. 8.) Lastly, they endeavor to conform their actions in everything to His. Choose to which of these classes you will belong, and remember that your glory in the next life will be proportionate to the exactness with which you follow Christ in this.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Divine Decree Concerning the Incarnation. I.**

I. What was the state of creation before the coming of Christ? A great part of the angels had fallen, and all mankind were the guilty descendants of guilty parents. The apostate angels were banished from heaven, and sent into hell. All mankind were in a state of banishment, they were slaves to the devil and enemies to God; and falling from one sin into another, they exposed themselves to undergo all those pains which God had reserved for His enemies. There were no possible means of appeasing the justice of God; for no creature could make sufficient atonement for original sin.

II. The three divine persons are employed in consultation to remedy the distresses of mankind. The first person required satisfaction for the offense of original

sin; and the second person voluntarily offered Himself as an atonement for that guilt. And when His Father said: "Sacrifice and oblation I did not desire," then He said, "behold I come." (Ps. xxxix. 7.) Admire this voluntary self-oblation of the Son, and admire, too, the Father's acceptance of it. O, ineffable effect of charity! To redeem His slave, the Father did not refuse to deliver up His only Son. Give thanks to both, and uniting with Them the Holy Ghost, expand your heart in sentiments of gratitude.

III. What would have become of you had not Christ acted as your mediator? You would have remained involved in all the consequences of sin, and you would besides have been subjected to the pains of hell. So that you might justly say, "unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had dwelt in hell." (Ps. xciii. 17.) Learn hence to esteem the benefit conferred on you; and since God has given Himself to you, do you give yourself to God. Say with the Royal Prophet, "my heart is ready, O, God, my heart is ready." (Ps. cvii. 2.) Do not recall or take back the gift which you have offered to God.

#### THURSDAY.

### **The Decree Concerning the Incarnation. II.**

I. Consider the admirable perfections of God displayed in this decree. His infinite wisdom dictated that our moral evils should be cured by their opposite virtues. Man sinned through pride, vainly affecting an equality with God. The tempter told our first parents in Paradise; "You shall be as gods." (Gen. iii. 5.) This vice was to be cured by the Redeemer, who "debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." (Phil. ii. 7.) Detest pride, which has

introduced so much evil into the world, and imitate the example of humility which Christ has given in His incarnation.

II. Consider His ineffable charity; "For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) The Son Himself had such an affection for it that He willingly surrendered Himself. Who, and for whom? The God of majesty, for a vile and ungrateful slave. Love, therefore, so loving a God with your whole heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength; and feeling convinced that you cannot love Him sufficiently, endeavor according to your state and calling to draw as many as you can into the love and service of so good a God.

III. Consider His infinite goodness in communicating Himself to man in the highest possible degree; His mercy, in taking upon Himself our miseries and their relief; His justice, which induced Him to satisfy His Father to the utmost, by making the whole of our debt His own; lastly, His power, in uniting two extremes of infinite distance from one another, God and man, the Creator and His creature. "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle, because He hath done wonderful things. The Lord hath made known His salvation: He hath revealed His justice in the sight of the Gentiles." (Ps. xcvi. 1 and 2.)

#### FRIDAY.

### Choice of a Mother for the Word Incarnate. I.

I. After the Incarnation had been decreed, the eternal Word might have assumed the perfect body of a man, such as was formed for Adam, without infringing the rigor of God's justice, which He desired to satisfy. He chose, however, to be born of a mother: first. in order to

honor both sexes, man in His own person, and woman by taking flesh and blood of her; secondly, that in her we also might have a mother to plead in our behalf with her son, who will be our Judge; thirdly, that becoming Himself a helpless infant, and subject to His mother, He might give us a striking example of humility and subjection. Reflect how in all these things, which were subject to His own will, He always chooses the worst and most repugnant to sense. Reflect and imitate.

II. The divine Word did not make choice of this individual mother for any merits of her own, which were none, but in order that she might have merit. He therefore bestowed upon her the fulness of grace and the perfection of virtue, in order that she might become worthy of the dignity which was designed for her. Congratulate her for this choice, and her predestination from all eternity. "I was set up from all eternity and of old before the earth was made." (Prov. viii. 23.) Offer yourself to be her eternal client, and earnestly implore her assistance and protection.

III. The Word incarnate did not choose for His mother a rich personage or princess, but one that was poor and from the lower walks of life. Thus he confounds our pride and vanity, which prompt us to seek after those things which appear great in the eyes of the world. "O, ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do ye love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3.) Learn to condemn the judgments of the world, and to consider those things only great which are so in the sight of God; and be convinced that much worth and virtue often lie concealed under a poor and humble appearance.

**SATURDAY.****Choice of a Mother for the Word Incarnate. II.**

I. It was proper that the eternal Word should honor His mother, and raise her above the common condition of mortals by special privileges. If "king Solomon made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with the finest gold—so that there was no such work made in any kingdom" (3 Kings x. 18), with how much more reason might the King of heaven adorn His throne, and decorate the habitation in which He was to remain for nine months.

II. Some of her special privileges were: 1. The greatest sanctity that ever fell to the lot of any pure creature was communicated to her from the first moment of her conception; for it was not proper that the mother of God should ever have been subject to the devil, even for a moment. 2. She never felt the stings of concupiscence. 3. She was confirmed in grace, which she never lost by mortal sin, and which was never diminished by venial sin. 4. This grace was continually increased by her heroic acts of virtue. 5. She conceived and remained a virgin. 6. She brought forth her Son without pain, and without detriment to her virginal integrity. 7. She is finally an ocean of all kinds of grace, and her perfection surpassed the united perfections of all the Saints and angels.

III. Consider the exalted titles to which she has a just claim. She is in a special manner the daughter of the eternal Father, the chosen mother of the only begotten Son, and the spouse of the Holy Ghost. She is the sovereign of men and angels. She is the mother of mercy and the refuge of sinners. Conceive what a refuge you have and what a protection you may find in such a



mother. Recommend yourself earnestly to her, "for," as St. Bernard says, "it is the will of Christ that we should have all through Mary."

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

### Christ the Expectation of the Gentiles.

"I will look towards the Lord: I will wait for God my Saviour."—(Micheas vii. 7.)

I. Consider what is read in this day's gospel: "Art thou he, that art to come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) Christ was the expected of all nations: as it is said in Genesis, "he shall be the expectation of nations" (Gen. xlix. 10), and by the prophet Aggeus, "the desired of all nations shall come." (Agg. ii. 8.) Christ with good reason was the expectation of the Gentiles, for He came to enlighten those that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; He came to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the lame; He came, in fine, to bring salvation to all. "He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.)

II. This Messias, this expectation of the Gentiles, will visit you to-day in the Eucharist, to free you from your iniquities, to cure your infirmities, to bestow on you the gifts of His grace, in a word, to save you. O, what a benefit is this! "Behold God is my Saviour," says Isaias, "I will deal confidently and will not fear." (Is. xii. 2.) Do you also act confidently with Him and surrender yourself entirely to His holy will.

III. In order to prepare for His coming, you must exercise yourself beforehand in fervent desires and longing sighs for Him. He is hence called "the expectation of nations and the desire of the everlasting hills (Gen. xlix. 10. 26), that is, of the holy Patriarchs and Proph-

ets: hence royal David sings, "with expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me." (Ps. xxxix. 1.) Expect him, therefore, with an ardent desire: purify your soul, lest being defiled with sin you may offend His pure eyes, and "bring upon yourself a curse instead of a blessing." (Gen. xxvii. 12.)

### MONDAY.

#### **Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.**

I. "The angel Gabriel was sent from God into the city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin, etc." (Luke i. 26.) Never did the world witness an embassy so solemn. The person who sends it is the God of majesty, the most holy and divine Trinity. The messenger is the archangel Gabriel, which signifies fortitude, that is to say, that the message which he brought, though it might appear difficult, or even impossible, must nevertheless be executed. Observe how promptly he undertakes his commission and learn to imitate him on similar occasions.

II. To whom is this message sent? Who, if he had seen such an ambassador dispatched immediately from God Himself, and descending from heaven to this lower world, would not have imagined that he had been dispatched to some mighty potentate? And yet he is sent to a city so obscure as to provoke the remark of Nathaniel, "can anything of good come from Nazareth?" (John i. 46.) He is sent to a small cottage, to a poor virgin, espoused to a carpenter. Be ashamed that you should so miserably love and seek after those things which appear great and pleasing to the eyes of the world. Convince yourself that this affection is erroneous, and labor to correct it.

III. The principal object of the embassy was to re-

quire the consent of the Virgin to be the mother of God. God has a right to exact anything that He pleases from His creatures, but he wishes that our correspondence with His will should be voluntary. "He who created you without your own concurrence," says St. Augustine, "will not save you without it." Alas! how often does God send you His invisible angels, His holy inspirations, to gain your good will, and consent that He may be conceived spiritually in your soul, and you refuse Him. Ask pardon for your obstinacy, and "if to-day you shall hear His voice harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv. 8.)

#### TUESDAY.

#### **The Angel's Salutation.**

I. "And the angel having come in, said to her, Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee." (Luke i. 28.) The grave comportment of the angel and the modesty of his countenance corresponded to his veneration of the Virgin. Learn hence to act like an angel in your intercourse with men, but more especially so with God in prayer. The Virgin was pronounced by the angel to be full of grace, by excellence, and far superior to all other pure creatures. Reflect what you are full of, whether of grace and virtue, or not rather of pride, vanity and self-love. "Our Lord is with thee," continued the angel, by His special presence and the effects of His grace; and she was with God in her thoughts, desires, and affections. Happy communication! Examine your actions and affections, and try to unite them to God.

II. Consider the actions and thoughts of the Virgin at that time. She was alone and praying in her closet (as the holy Fathers tell us), to teach you how you ought to entertain yourself with God in solitude, if you desire to

be visited by Him. "And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying" (Luke i. 29), that is, at her own praises uttered by the angel, as whosoever that is truly humble will be; for he believes that praise belongs to God and not to himself. "She thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be," prudently examining everything, lest she might be deceived. O, that the first woman had been so prudent and so humble, and had so carefully weighed the words of the fallen angel.

III. How different are your proceedings! On every occasion you seek your own praises and applaud yourself when you hear them spoken by others; and not satisfied to be commended by others you do it yourself. When you hear those things which are pleasing, you do not imitate the Virgin, and examine "what manner of salutation this should be," but immediately embrace it with your whole heart. Your first duty is to examine every affair with prudence before you undertake it, and following the advice of the wise man, "let your eyelids go before your steps." (Prov. iv. 25.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Delivery of the Message.**

I. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son." (Luke i. 30.) Reflect how the angel dispels all fear from the mind of the Virgin, and observe that it is the character of a good spirit to bring peace and security to the soul. "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God;" for true joy and security are only to be found in the grace of God, and not in worldly gratifications and pleasures, in which we have too often sought them. This grace the Virgin possessed

in an eminent degree over every other creature, in such a manner that the words spoken of queen Esther may be applied to her: "And the King loved her more than all the women, and she had favor and kindness before him above all the women." (Esth. ii. 17.)

II. Consider the substance of the message which the angel bore: "Thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus," that is, Saviour. "He shall be great," by nature, since He is God; by His office, for He is the mediator between God and man; in consequence of His perfections, "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, corporally." (Coloss. ii. 9.) "He shall be called the Son of the Most High," not by adoption, as are all the just, but by nature. "And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father," but in a far more eminent degree. "And He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever," that is in the church of the faithful. (Luke i. 32.) Rejoice at these glorious prerogatives of your Saviour, and congratulate the mother on the greatness of the son.

III. Consider with St. Bernard, these words: "He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever." Learn to imitate the conduct of Jacob, and expel the influence of the devil from your soul. Struggle with your vicious inclinations and propensities. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body" (Rom. vi. 12), but let Jesus Christ reign in your soul forever. Say with St. Bernard, "I have no other king but my Lord Jesus Christ."

#### THURSDAY.

#### **The Blessed Virgin's Reply.**

I. "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (Luke i. 34.) The blessed Virgin, who had hitherto been

silent, began at last to speak in defence of her virginity, which she would not forfeit even to become the mother of God. O, admirable purity ! In this virtue she was truly singular and without example. Learn from her, 1, both to speak and to be silent at proper times and on proper occasions. 2, not to be withdrawn from your good purposes or obligations, on any account or pretext without carefully examining as she did "how this may be done." 3, to be cautious in point of chastity, and to avoid every danger in regard to that delicate virtue, for "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

II. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke i. 35.) Ponder the excellency of Virginity, of which Christ was so great a lover, that, whilst He took upon Himself all our other miseries, yet He would not be conceived and born but of a Virgin. And because the Virgin herself was devotedly attached to this virtue, the Divine Spirit of purity Himself, effected that her son, who as God was born only of the Father, as man was born only of herself. Beseech the Lord to visit you with His holy grace, and "to overshadow you with His shoulders," especially "in the day of battle," when you have to fight against the concupiscence of the flesh. (Ps. xc. 4, and cxxxix. 8.)

III. "Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age." (Luke i. 36.) She that was barren has become fruitful, in order that you may discover that nothing is impossible to God. Therefore although you have hitherto been fruitless in good works, yet by the divine grace and your own concurrence, you may produce many, not only in yourself, but also in your neighbors, according to your condition and state of life. Therefore, begin now to co-operate with God's grace;

for He will not be wanting to you, "who maketh a barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of children." (Ps. cxii. 9.)

#### FRIDAY.

### The Virgin's Consent.

I. How earnestly the Angel and the whole court of heaven awaited the consent of the Virgin! "Speak but the word," says St. Bernard, "holy Virgin, which heaven and earth, and the world below, expect from you." She gives her consent, and says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." (Luke i. 38.) Admire that singular humility, which prompted her, who is styled the mother of God, to retain the name of a handmaid. This is the humility, which our "Lord regarded" and loved so much in her, as she proclaims in her Canticle. Embrace the same humility in your life and actions, if you wish the Holy Ghost to dwell in you; for "He sendeth forth springs in the vales." (Ps. ciii. 10.) He bestows on the humble, the waters of His grace; but He deprives the proud of their moisture.

II. The quality of handmaid, or servant, though contemptible amongst men, in relation to God is honorable. We stand in that relation to Him, by the several titles of creation, redemption, and preservation. For Him alone we ought to labor, to His glory we ought to direct all our actions, as did His blessed handmaid. Offer yourself, therefore, to God, as His constant servant: and say with royal David, "O Lord, I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid." (Ps. cxv. 6.) Remember that that handmaid was the blessed Virgin Mary.

III. Consider the admirable obedience and resignation of the blessed Virgin in conforming her will to the

Divine pleasure. "Be it done to me according to Thy word." (Luke i. 38.) Conceive how agreeable this answer was to God, to angels, and to men. Imitate her resignation, and the resignation of her divine son, who afterwards prayed, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi. 39) The angel had fulfilled his commission, the holy Trinity was rejoiced, and the Virgin arrested the attention of God, of angels, and of man. Let your conduct prove that she has gained some of your attention.

### SATURDAY.

#### **Accomplishment of the Incarnation.**

I. After the Virgin's consent, the eternal Word, "as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber," to celebrate his nuptials with human nature, "rejoiced as a giant to run the way" (Ps. xviii. 6), to unite Himself to the weakness of human nature, and to commence the work of our redemption. He took flesh of the Virgin Mary; to this He united a rational soul, and He communicated His divinity to both. Thus, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John i. 14.) Conceive what joy the angels in heaven felt, and the Saints in limbo, at the accomplishment of this salutary mystery.

II. Consider what kind of a body the eternal Word assumed in the Virgin's womb. He might have assumed a body immortal and glorious (for this was His due); but He preferred to take to Himself the mortal flesh of a helpless infant. 1. In order that He might "in all things be made like to His brethren." (Heb. ii. 17.) 2. In order to induce us to love Him more tenderly. 3. To remove all fear from us, and to inspire us with confidence. 4. To give us an example of humility, patience and mortifica-



tion, by remaining nine months imprisoned in His mother's womb, in the most distressing situation. 5. In order that He might satisfy, in the flesh, for our debts, like a condemned criminal. You, who are but dust and ashes, learn to be humble, when you see the Lord of hosts thus humbled for your sake.

III. What were the first acts of the divine infant immediately after His conception? He offered Himself and His whole life to the eternal Father, as a holocaust and a sacrifice for our sins. He said, in the inspired language of His prophet, "Behold, I come." (Ps. xxxix. 8.) The eternal Father was pleased with His new born Son, and He might well have said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." (Ps. ii. 7.) This day was a day of joy to heaven and to earth.—On this day, "Mercy and truth met each other: and justice and peace kissed. Truth has sprung out of the earth: and justice has looked down from heaven." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12.)

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

#### **Christ the Anointed of the Lord.**

"Draw me, we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments."—(Cant. i. 3.)

I. The Pharisees, in the gospel of to-day, sent to St. John, to inquire whether or not he were the Christ. This title belongs to none but the Redeemer, or the anointed of the Lord. He was anointed by a triple unction, as King, Prophet, and High Priest.—"Thy name is as oil poured out." (Cant. i. 2.) "Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." (Ps. xlv. 8.) Who, then, would not "run after Him to the odor of His ointments." (Cant. i. 3.)

II. This anointed of the Lord will visit you to-day in

the Eucharist, to make you partaker of His sweet ointments. "Myrrh, and stacte, and cassia perfume thy garments" (Ps. xlv. 9), that is the sacramental forms under which Christ is clothed in the Eucharist. At His visit He will anoint you with His three-fold unction: 1. With the unction of mercy He will efface all your sins. 2. With the unction of fortitude He will strengthen you against your spiritual enemies. 3. With the unction of wisdom He will instruct and enlighten your understanding. "For His unction teacheth you concerning all things." (1 John ii. 27.)

III. You ought to prepare yourself against His coming. "I have prepared a lamp for my anointed." (Ps. cxxxi. 27.) This expression the holy Fathers interpret of John the Baptist; for "he was a burning and a shining light." (John v. 35.) Prepare, also, in the same manner, the lamp of your soul; purify it from sin, and give it the lustre of good works. Let the flame of divine love burn interiorly in your soul; and prove its existence there by external virtuous actions and good example.

## MONDAY.

### Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

I. As soon as the Word incarnate was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, He hastened to sanctify His precursor and commence His office as Saviour. He inspired His mother to visit her cousin Elizabeth, in order that she, who was to be the mediatrix between us and her son, might in some manner concur to the first sanctification which He wrought. She readily obeyed the divine impulse, and willingly embraced the occasion of doing a good office. Learn of her to be zealous in assisting others and to lose no occasion of exercising charity.

II. "And Mary rising up in those days, went into the mountainous country with haste, into a city of Judea." (Luke i. 39.) Admire the promptness of her obedience to the divine Spirit. Neither the tediousness nor the difficulties attending a long journey, neither the delicacy of her sex, nor her lately acquired dignity, could deter her from undertaking the journey. This journey was not undertaken from vain ceremony nor compliment; not out of curiosity nor doubt in regard to what the angel had said, but from a motive of pure zeal for the glory of God and a desire of assisting her neighbor. Meditate on her singular modesty, recollection, and devotion, with which she entertained the Son of God; and learn how you ought to entertain the same God when you carry Him in your breast under the sacramental forms.

III. All those who are full of the divine Spirit naturally tend towards the mountain of perfection. They despise the world and soar above it, and their thoughts are centred in heaven. "Save thyself in the mountain," said the angel to Lot. (Gen. xix. 17.) Besides, they act with vigor, with speed, and with fervor; for, as St. Ambrose writes, "The grace of the Holy Ghost knows no lingering delays." Examine whether or not, in your thoughts and desires, you adhere to inferior things, and linger in the way that leads to the mountain of perfection.

#### **TUESDAY.**

#### **Entrance into the House of Elizabeth.**

I. Mary having entered into the house of Elizabeth, saluted her first, though herself the greater in dignity. Thus Christian charity should prompt every one to act. Imagine what modesty and charity were displayed upon the occasion. There were no empty compliments nor

unmeaning worldly ceremonies; but all was real expression of mutual joy. At the voice of Mary the eternal Word sanctified His precursor, purified him from original sin, enriched him with the gifts of grace and sanctity, endowed him with the use of reason, and made him sensible, even then, of the mystery of the Incarnation and his own happiness.—“For behold,” exclaimed the enraptured Elizabeth, “as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.” (Luke i. 44.)

II. At the voice of Mary, “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Luke i, 41, 42.) She was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, “and cried out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” Learn hence, how beneficial is the mediation of the Virgin, by whose means the eternal Word wrought such admirable effects in the infant and his mother. Salute her in the spirit of Elizabeth; acknowledge and praise her excellence, arising from her divine maternity.

III. Consider those other words of Elizabeth: “Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke i. 43.) The spirit of God always prompts humility, and humility attends all His gifts. Observe how by divine inspiration she styles her Mother of God, which the Church acknowledges as her chief title. Learn from the infant and his mother how you ought to entertain Christ in the Eucharist.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### The Canticle “Magnificat.”

After Elizabeth had uttered these praises, the blessed Virgin poured forth her sentiments of gratitude and hu-

mility, in the words of the admirable Canticle *Magnificat*. Remark that she does not entertain Elizabeth with the same praises which she had received from her, as worldly principles would dictate; nor does she, from a dissembling pretence of humility, as worldlings generally do, deny the favors which she had received: she refers all to God, and ascribes nothing to herself. Learn hence, that it is not real humility to deny or dissemble the natural or supernatural gifts which we possess. You must, however, acknowledge that they proceed from the mere goodness of God,—not from yourself or your own deserts; and you must refer to Him all the praise and honor resulting from them, and usurp nothing of them to yourself.

II. In this Canticle we are taught two important lessons: First, to rejoice and delight in God alone and in those things which appertain to our salvation, and not in the vanities and pleasures nor in the praises and favors of the world. It was God alone who had “done great things” to the blessed Virgin, and who daily does great things for His Church. “He alone is mighty, His name alone is holy, His mercy is from generation to generation, to those who fear Him.” (Luke i. 49.) Not to those who condemn Him, and provoke His anger by their sins. Examine in what things you take the most delight, and whether you be in the class of those who “rejoice in most wicked things.” (Prov. ii. 14.)

III. The second important lesson which we are taught in the *Magnificat* is, that humility is a virtue of the greatest efficacy. It was so, 1, in regard to the Virgin herself; for it was the foundation of all her greatness. She acknowledges it herself when she says, “He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” 2. It

was so in regard to all mankind: For God "hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble; He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent away empty." (Luke i. 52.) If you, therefore, wish to be favored by Almighty God, if you desire to be exalted, and if you wish to be filled with good things, learn to be humble, and, with St. Bernard, "love to be unknown and not regarded."

#### THURSDAY.

#### **The Stay with Elizabeth.**

I. Although the presence of the virgin mother and her divine son were so beneficial to Elizabeth and the Baptist, it did not restore speech to Zachary. We may piously believe, however, that he received many spiritual favors. The restoration of his speech was reserved by Christ for the honor of His precursor, at His birth. Learn hence, to reverence the divine providence of God in the dispensation of His favors, and respectfully abstain from prescribing to it the time and manner of affording assistance; but patiently wait, with Zachary, the divine pleasure.

II. The Virgin remained in the house of Zachary about the space of three months, displaying in her words and actions that humility and charity which had rendered her worthy to become the Mother of God. Conceive how holy was the conversation of the blessed company, and what benefit was derived from it. "If at the first entrance," says St. Ambrose, "the benefit was so great, that at Mary's salutation the infant leaped for joy, and his mother was filled with the Holy Ghost, what do we think ought Mary's presence to have added by the benefit of so long a time?" Love, therefore, to converse with

the good, and take care that others may profit by your company and conversation.

III. Consider the inspired words of Scripture: "The ark of the Lord abode in the house of Obbededom, the Gethite, three months; and the Lord blessed Obbededom and all his household. (2 Kings vi. 11.) How much more may we suppose did He bless the house of Zachary, in which the living ark of the Lord and the mother of God dwelt so long. The same blessings will be received by you when He visits you in the holy sacrament if you give Him a proper reception.

#### FRIDAY.

#### **Nativity of John the Baptist.—I.**

I. The parents of the Baptist were pronounced by the Evangelist to be "both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." (Luke i. 6.) Here strengthen your faith on the important dogma that it is possible to observe all the commandments of God; for Zachary and Elizabeth observed them. It is possible, too, to observe the counsels; for they walked in all the justifications of the Lord without blame. Aim at the perfection of your calling, and be just in the sight of God and blameless in your conversation with men.

II. God honored the birth of His precursor. 1. By sending the same angel to announce his birth that was employed in announcing the birth of His own Son. 2. The manner in which his birth was announced was more solemn than that by which the Redeemer was made known; for his birth was announced to the high priest in the temple at the time of public sacrifice, when all the people were filled with wonder and expectation. 3. The

angel himself gave him a name, and we do not read that this ever happened to any other except to Christ. This was not an unmeaning name, but full of mystery, and it imports that the Baptist was specially favored by Almighty God.

III. Consider the dignity of the Baptist's office: "He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias." (Luke i. 17.) It was his duty to bear witness to the truth of the Incarnation, and to point out the Messiah. He was to do this in the spirit and power of Elias, that is, with an undaunted courage and undiminished zeal, which accompanied him during the whole course of his life—in the wilderness, at the river Jordan, in cities, in the court of Herod, in prison, and in death itself. "He prepared for the Lord a perfect people" (Luke i. 17), by his baptism, by his preaching penance, and by the austerity of his life. Examine whether it be not your duty to do all or something of this, and excite yourself to imitate the example of St. John.

## SATURDAY.

### Nativity of John the Baptist.—II.

I. "Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son." (Luke i. 57.) Reflect on the joy of the parents, and the congratulations of their friends, for this blessing. Such is the joy of the Saints and angels, and such the internal satisfaction of the soul when it conceives virtuous resolutions and is fruitful in good works. Be not discouraged if you do not immediately attain that virtue, or overcome that vice, which you desire. God is accustomed to delay his gifts and favors, in order to inflame your desires of them.



"Trust, therefore, in the Lord, and do good, and He will give thee the request of thy heart." (Ps. xxxvi. 3, 4.)

II. "He shall be called John" (Luke i. 60), which signifies grace; for no Saint whatever, Christ's blessed mother alone excepted, possessed such an abundance of grace. He was by his office and by the purity of his life an angel; he was an Elias in spirit; he was more than a prophet; he was sanctified in his mother's womb; and, as Christ Himself tells us, "a greater than he never rose from a woman." Reverence this Saint, so singularly beloved and so nearly allied to our Lord, and endeavor to imitate his heroic virtues.

III. Consider what happened at his birth: 1. His mother, by divine inspiration, gives him his name. 2. His father writing the same name, "his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed; and he spoke, blessing God." 3. He was "filled with the Holy Ghost." 4. "Fear came upon all their neighbors: and all these words were divulged over the mountainous country of Judea." 5. "All they who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What kind of child think you shall this be? For the hand of the Lord was with him." (Luke i. 64 to 66.) Do you, in like manner, lay these things up in your heart by serious meditation, and pray that the hand of the Lord may be also with you.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

##### Christ the Guest of your Soul.

"Zacheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house."—(Luke xix. 5.)

I. Christ, although He be the King of glory, whom myriads of angels attend in heaven, ardently desires, notwithstanding, to become the guest of your soul. Hence

He says, in the Apocalypse, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Apoc. iii. 20.) Consider the greatness of the favor ; reflect who you are, and who He is.

II. Consider what is said in the gospel of this day : "Prepare ye the ways of the Lord, make straight His paths." (Luke iii. 4.) You must prepare your heart to entertain so great a guest. Your guest is content even with what is mean, provided it be pure ; hence he would take flesh in the purest womb of the Virgin, be laid in a new sepulchre, and wrapt in a clean winding-sheet. He is highly pleased with humility, and as much offended with pride and self-conceit. If there be a "valley" of imperfection in your soul you must fill it up, as is said in the gospel of to-day, if there be a "hill" of pride you must level it. Meet your guest, then, with acts of adoration and humility, and say, from the bottom of your soul, "Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." (Luke vii. 6.)

III. With what pomp, kindness and hearty welcome the Saints in the Scripture received their guests ! Abraham, the three angels (Gen. xviii. 3) ; the Sunamite woman, the prophet Eliseus (4. King. iv. 8) ; Martha, Christ Himself. (Luke x. 38.) Imitate their holy example, and present your whole heart undivided to your guest. This is all that He requires. "My Son," He says, "give me thy heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.) He will not receive this heart, if it be either divided by self-love or a prey to inordinate affection or undue propensities.

## MONDAY.

**Mary's Virginity Revealed to Joseph.—I.**

I. The singular sanctity of St. Joseph corresponded with his exalted office. God had not yet revealed to him the mystery of the Incarnation in order to prove both his and the Virgin's virtue. When he perceived her pregnancy, he was much troubled, and "being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, he thought of putting her away privately." (Matt. i. 19.) Thus, God frequently tries the virtue and perseverance of His servants, though only for a time; for "He shall not suffer the just to waver forever." (Ps. liv. 23.)

II. Consider the many virtues which the holy man exercised in this perplexity of mind: Patience, in supporting and concealing the matter; charity, in not reproaching her; prudence, in taking mature deliberation with himself in regard to what ought to be done. Imitate his example when you discover anything apparently wrong in the conduct of your neighbor; avoid rash judgment, and follow the advice of St. Bernard: "excuse the intention, if you cannot the fact; consider it a mistake, judge it a surprise, think it a chance."

III. Consider the admirable virtues which the Virgin also exercised during this perplexity of St. Joseph. She alleges nothing in her own defence, although she might have done so. Her honor was in question in a matter of the highest and most delicate importance. She chooses to be silent, however, and rather to commit the matter to God alone than publish anything which might redound to her own praise. "My secret to myself," she might have said with Isaias. (Is

xxiv. 16.) This is, perhaps, not your conduct: you immediately reveal whatever tends to your own commendation; and, though you may be criminal, you attempt even "to excuse yourself in your sins." (Ps. cxl. 4.)

**TUESDAY.**

**Mary's Virginity Revealed to Joseph.—II.**

I. "Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep." (Matt. i. 20.) This angel honors St. Joseph with the title of son of David. He removes from his mind all trouble and anxiety, in relation to his spouse, by informing him of the mystery of the Incarnation. Observe how God, in due time, assists holy souls who are in distress; when all human means fail, He sends them succor from heaven. Admire the providence of God, which never abandons us, although it seems to leave us for a time. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee." (Is. liv. 7.)

II. Consider the feelings of joy which St. Joseph experienced when he was informed of the mystery of the Incarnation, the perfect innocence of the Virgin, and her election to be the mother of God. He felt the importance of the dignity to which he was raised; he was not only the guardian and spouse of the mother of God, but he was also the reputed father of the Son of God; and, as father, he was to give Him the name of Jesus. Congratulate Him on His elevation to this honor, and reverence with singular devotion him whom both the mother and the Son so highly honored.

III. Consider the mutual joy of the Virgin and St. Joseph after the angel had revealed to him the mystery of the Incarnation. Conceive and reverence their mutual

congratulations when he informed her of the angel vision. St. Joseph probably condemned himself of suspicion, in consequence of the anxiety which he had experienced. Learn the importance of the virtue of charity, and convince yourself that it is more safe to err from an excess of charity than to be correct with defect of charity. Learn, also, to put your trust in God alone, in every perplexing event of life; for it is He alone who, after a storm, "makes a calm; and after tears and weeping pours in joyfulness." (Tob. iii. 22.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Expectation of Delivery.—I.**

I. The infant Jesus, shut up in His mother's womb, earnestly desired that hour in which He was to appear to the world and commence the work of our salvation. He might have then said, as He afterwards did, "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) He remained in this state, however, for nine months, and would not exempt Himself for one day. He had embraced our common nature, and He would not refuse any of the inconveniences or sufferings which were attached to it. What man would suffer himself to be so long imprisoned when he could avoid it? Christ suffered it, and for your sake. Be ashamed, then, to complain of small inconveniences, when God suffered so much.

II. The desire of the blessed Virgin to see her Son, whom she knew to be "God of God," increased in proportion as the happy moment approached. She might well apply to herself those words of the Canticle: "Who shall give thee to me, that I may find thee and kiss thee." (Cant. viii. 1.) In the mean time, whilst her

heart was filled with the most ardent affections of love, she resigned herself with perfect conformity to the will of God, in regard to the time, place, and manner of her delivery, because she was convinced that "God hath care of us." (1 Pet. v. 7.) Imitate her example, and "cast all your solicitude upon God."

III. How well the divine Infant rewarded His mother whilst He remained shut up in her womb! If at the first moment of His conception He bestowed upon her such extraordinary grace and favor, what increase of these did He not give her throughout the nine months during which she carried Him in her womb. He illuminated her understanding with an infused light and knowledge of the mysteries of faith; He inflamed her will with more than seraphic affections of love. He was no burden, no pain, no trouble to her; but a most welcome guest, and an effectual comforter on all occasions. He would be so to you, with due proportion, in the sacrament, if you would give Him a similar entertainment and not immediately distract your mind with other affairs.

#### THURSDAY.

##### **The Expectation of Delivery.—II.**

I. This expectation existed on the part of the Fathers in Limbo; they prayed and cried out continually with Isaias: "Drop dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened and bud forth a saviour." (xlv. 8.) They longed to be set free from bondage in order that they might enjoy the beatific vision. "Shine forth," they exclaimed from their prison-house, "before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses. Stir up thy might, and come to save us." (Ps. lxxix. 3.) Rouse your sluggish mind with these inflamed desires.

"Be ashamed" (it was the reflection of St. Bernard), "that the display of so much kindness does not cause in you a joy corresponding to that inflamed desire, which the mere promise excited in the hearts of the ancient Saints."

II. What expectation a devout soul ought to entertain of having Christ spiritually born in itself by grace! "What is my hope? is it not the Lord?" (Ps. xxxviii. 8.) In this expectation we ought to employ all the faculties of our souls: our memories and understandings should attentively consider His admirable virtues and perfections: our wills should be exercised in ardent affections of love, and in desires of representing in ourselves what we behold in Him, in order that we may with the Apostle "behold the glory of the Lord with face uncovered, and be transformed into the same image." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

III. We ought not to content ourselves with mere affections and desires, for by these we only conceive Christ; but we must bring Him forth by actions. We must labor in the exercise of Christian perfection "till Christ be formed in us." (Gal. iv. 19.) If our desires do not display themselves in acts of virtue, they will only torture our consciences and prove our ruin. "Desires," says the Wise Man, "kill the slothful." (Prov. xxi. 25.) Encourage yourself, therefore, and inflame your heart with the antiphons of the Church used during this holy time. "O wisdom, which issued from the mouth of the Most High, extending from end to end mightily, and sweetly disposing all things, come and teach us the way of prudence, etc."

## FRIDAY.

**The Journey to Bethlehem.**

I. "In those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled." (Luke ii. 1.) The disposition of divine Providence was most wonderful. Christ might have been born where, and when, and in whatever circumstances He pleased, but He refused every convenience for Himself, in order to teach us that the spirit of poverty was His favorite virtue. He was born in the middle of winter, when His parents, in consequence of Cæsar's edict, were far from Nazareth, in order that He might deprive Himself of those small conveniences which their house might afford Him. "Oh the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God!" (Rom. xi. 33.) Reflect upon this, you who are constantly employed in seeking your own ease and conveniences, and learn what ought to be your practice. Speaking upon this, St. Bernard observes: "Either God is deceived or the world is in an error," because their manners of acting are diametrically opposite. Examine which it is better to follow.

II. St. Joseph and the Virgin obeyed the edict, though the motive of the Emperor was not the best, and though their obedience was attended with inconvenience. View the holy travellers: they present an object worthy of the divine approbation and of the admiration of men, in consequence of their conformity to the will of God, their patience, and their modesty. Imagine the divine entertainment which the Virgin received from her Son; respect the holy travellers, and venerate that divine poverty which rendered them so pleasing to God.



III. When they arrived at Bethlehem, they went from one inn to another, but they could not find any entertainment. Good God! there was a place for every other kind of character; but there was no room to be found for the Son of God. "He came unto His own; and His own received Him not." (John i. 11.) Observe with what patience they support this trial, and retire into a stable. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." (Matt. viii. 20.) Pity, admire, adore. How often have you denied Him entertainment, when your heart was occupied with worldly vanities and earthly follies!

## CHRISTMAS DAY.

### Christ a Little One.

"Whoever is a little one, let him come to me." (Prov. ix. 4.)

I. Consider the words of the prophet Isaias: "A little one is born to us, and a son is given to us" (Is. ix. 6); and the corresponding words of the gospel: "You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." (Luke ii. 12.) Thus does the Lord of majesty delight in the name of a little one; and, that He might gratify this desire, He reduced Himself almost to nothing. Contemplate this little one in His crib; and remember that it is that Being "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and weighed the heavens with a span; who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." (Is. xl. 12.)

II. This little one will be spiritually born in your soul this day, by holy communion, if you will prepare Him a crib in Bethlehem, that is, "in the house of bread." He

appeared to mankind first clothed in flesh; but now He communicates Himself to you under the form of bread, in order to impart to your soul the living bread of immortality. Approach, then, this divine mystery in such a manner that this little one may again be born in your heart; and convince yourself that this will be the case, if you begin to lead a life conformable to His own; if you love nothing but what He loved, so that you may be able to say, with the Apostle, "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

III. In order that you may enjoy this little one, you must become such a one yourself. "Amen, I say to you, unless ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 13.) "Be little in your own eyes," that you may be the "head of the tribes of Israel" (1 Kings xv. 17), that is, great among the Saints. To such as these only God communicates the secrets of His wisdom. "I give thanks to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," says Christ Himself, "because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Matt. xi. 25.) And David says: "The testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones." (Ps. xviii. 8.)

## ST. STEPHEN'S DAY—DECEMBER 26.

### The Birth of Christ.—I.

I. The blessed Virgin having entered into the stable at Bethlehem, and perceiving the time of her happy delivery approaching, was wholly fixed upon God, in high contemplation, when the eternal Word made His first appearance upon earth. The divine Infant issues from His mother's womb, without detriment to her virginal integrity,

as He afterwards rose from the monument which was closed upon Him. As the great master of humility, He commences His lessons of humility to mankind. Contemplate the feelings of the Virgin at that moment. What sentiments of reverence towards her God and of love towards her Son did she feel! Observe with what affection she embraces Him; how she clothes Him, as far as her poverty and the circumstances would permit, and lays Him in the manger. See how she and St. Joseph adore Him, and give Him thanks, for coming into the world, and for choosing her for His mother and him for His reputed father. Join the holy company in their affections and adoration.

II. What joy existed in heaven upon this occasion! How pleased was the heavenly Father at this new sight; "When He introduceth the first-begotten into the world, He saith: And let all the angels of God adore Him." (Heb. i. 6.) Imagine you see the angels of heaven falling prostrate in adoration, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth, the heavens and the earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory." Rejoice, and adore your new-born Saviour.

III. On this occasion was verified the prediction of Isaias: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood." (Is. i. 3.) These irrational animals, that were in the stable when Christ was born, seem to have been more sensible than were the Jews. Examine whether or not you be one of those Israelites who do not know your Lord when He has come amongst you. "He who saith He knoweth Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar; and the truth is not in him." (1 John ii. 4.)

**ST. JOHN'S DAY—DECEMBER 27.****The Birth of Christ.—II.**

Imagine yourself present in the stable at Bethlehem, and, fixing your eyes on the blessed Infant lying in the manger, ask yourself these important questions;

"Who is this Infant?" The only begotten Son of the eternal Father, "true God of true God. The Lord the God of hosts is His name." (Amos iv. 13.) And "the pillars of heaven tremble and dread at His beck." (Job xxvi. 11.) He is infinitely powerful, and infinitely wise. His perfections are incomprehensible, and His being is eternal.

"What are the circumstances that attend Him?" He suffers all the extremities of cold; He is poorly covered; He is destitute of every kind of convenience and accommodation. There are no servants to attend Him; there is no one near Him, except the Virgin and her spouse, by whose care and labor He is maintained.

"Where is He?" He is far from His own country, and His home; He lies exposed in a manger, between two brute beasts. He might well say of Himself, "I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.)

"Why all this?" For your sake, for the love of you, and to give you example: "to restore lost man to the kingdom of heaven."

"How does this happen?" He was not forced to do this, but He did it by His own free choice. "He was offered because it was His own will." (Is. liii. 7.) He offered Himself cheerfully and with joy. Therefore, when He entered into the world "He hath rejoiced as a giant

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to run the way" (Ps. xviii. 6), although that way were painful and difficult.

"When does this happen?" In the depth of winter and at midnight, a season and an hour of all others the most inconvenient; and yet "the Father hath put the times and moments in His own power." (Acts i. 7.) Be astonished at what you see; give thanks; return love for love, and let this love show itself in imitation.

### **FEAST OF HOLY INNOCENTS—DECEMBER 28.**

#### **The Birth of Christ.—II.**

I. God displayed His perfections in the mystery of His nativity. He displayed in a wonderful manner His infinite goodness. In the creation of the world His omnipotence was manifest: and His providence is displayed in its government. But in this mystery, as St. Paul observes, He displays His "goodness and kindness." (Titus iii. 4.) He was made man, in order that He might the better be known by man; He was born in poverty and want, in order that He might the more endear Himself to us; He made His first appearance in an open stable, that He might the more easily be found; He lies in a manger, to encourage the poor; He conceals His power, to relieve your mind from the fear of approaching Him; He assumes all the characters of the most perfect meekness, in order to win your heart.

II. Consider the extreme poverty and love of that virtue, which Christ displayed in this mystery. He made choice of a poor, humble maid for His mother, and of an artisan for His reputed father. He was born far from His home, in an abandoned stable. Reflect who it is that gave these exalted lessons of poverty. It is the God of all things, who "being rich, He became poor for your

sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Seek, then, for these divine riches, by imitating the poverty of the Redeemer.

III. Consider the incomparable example of humility, which is exhibited in this mystery. He was the God of heaven and earth, and equal to His Father; yet He humbled Himself to the despicable condition of a slave, "despised, and the most abject of men." (Is. liii. 3.) He reduced Himself to this degradation, to teach you the real value of earthly honor, and the esteem of men, of which you are so pitifully fond. Be confounded at your conduct, by comparing it with the example which the divine Infant gave in His nativity.

#### DECEMBER 29.

### **The Message to the Shepherds.**

I. After the Divine Son had humbled Himself so low, His heavenly Father had decreed that He should be honored, and that His nativity should be made known to the shepherds by the message of angels; because "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xiv. 11.) Ponder deeply the words of the Evangelist, "And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear." (Luke ii. 8.)

II. Christ did not wish to be made known to the wise men around Bethlehem, because they were proud; nor to the rich, because they were covetous; nor to the noble, because they were addicted to worldly pleasures; but to simple shepherds, that is, to men who were poor, humble, laborious, vigilant, and attentive to their duty.

Imitate their conduct, and you will be visited by divine grace.

III. Consider more particularly the necessity of practising humility. Satan and his associates had fallen from heaven, in consequence of their pride: and pride was the cause of the apostasy of our first parents, and of all the consequences of original sin. Since that period it has been the ruling passion of mankind. No vice is more opposite to the end of our creation. To destroy this passion, then, was one of the most important objects of Christ's Incarnation. Hence, on every occasion he gives us perfect examples of the opposite virtue. He is born of a poor virgin, in a wretched stable; He is abandoned by those whom He came to save; and His first visitors were poor, humble shepherds. In a word, His whole life was one grand and divine act of humility. Conceive, then, the importance of this virtue: and learn from Christ to practise it. Be convinced, that without it all is lost, and that it is the best test of real piety, devotion, and religion.

#### DECEMBER 30.

### **The Message to the Shepherds.—II.**

I. Consider the words of the angel: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings—for this day is born to you a Saviour." (Luke ii. 10, 11.) The joys of the world are either vain or base, or worse. The only true and solid satisfaction for a Christian is to be found in God, and in things belonging to our salvation: and this joy, as Christ Himself says, "no man shall take from you." (John xvi. 20.) Reflect, how many reasons you have to rejoice at the birth of this Saviour, "who shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21), that is,

from the power and slavery of the devil, by bestowing upon them every spiritual blessing, which leads to life everlasting. These spiritual blessings He is ready to bestow on you, whenever your conduct deserves them. Take advantage of them, and say with the prophet: "I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus." (Habac. iii. 18.)

II. "And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." (Luke ii. 12.) What are the signs by which this Messiah, this Lord and Saviour of the world, is to be found? "Infancy, swaddling-clothes, and a manger." Who would not have expected to hear of a royal personage, of thrones and princely robes? Examine if you can find corresponding signs of poverty and humility in your heart. Hence you may discover whether or not Christ be spiritually born in your soul.

III. "And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest." (Luke ii. 13.) Listen to the celestial harmony; and let your actions agree with the sentiment that prompted it. Let the nativity of Christ be a cause of your glorifying God in all things. The angel sang also, "On earth peace to men of good will." Learn from this, that both interior and exterior peace, both with God, our neighbors, and ourselves, is one of the peculiar benefits of the incarnation of Christ. "In His days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away." (Ps. lxxi. 7.) Remember, however, that this peace can never exist, except with "men of good will; for there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord." (Is. xlvi. 22.)



**DECEMBER 31.****The Adoration of the Shepherds.**

I. "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word, which is come to pass." (Luke ii. 15.) Observe the prompt obedience of the shepherds, and learn thence to obey with promptitude the divine inspirations. "For they came with haste. No one can see Christ slothfully," says St. Ambrose. Go you, also, over frequently to Bethlehem, and meditate on the mysteries, which were there exhibited for your sanctification and salvation. Say with holy David, "Oh that some man would give me a drink of the water out of the cistern which is in Bethlehem!" (2 Kings xxiii. 15.) This cistern, in your regard, is the manger; and the water is Christ, who is "the fountain of living water" (Jer. ii. 13), "and the fountain of wisdom." (Ecclus. i. 5.)

II. "And they found Mary and Joseph; and the Infant lying in a manger." (Luke ii. 16.) Hence you may learn that the easiest way of finding Christ is by means of the blessed Virgin and the intercession of the Saints. Observe with what spiritual joy the shepherds perform their acts of adoration. They "return," and recount what they have seen to others, "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard." (Luke ii.) Unite your adorations with theirs, and glorify and praise God, by imitating the example of this new-born Infant.

III. "But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." (Luke ii. 19.) Observe the four classes of people that were then in Bethlehem. 1. Some passed by the crib, saw the shepherds and the object of their wonder; but, seeing nothing themselves extraordinary, passed on,

without taking further notice. 2. Others heard and admired what the shepherds related; but, being occupied with what they conceived to be of greater importance, thought no more of the subject. 3. The shepherds came and adored with lively faith and spiritual joy; but afterwards returned to their usual occupation, and no more is heard of them. 4. Only the blessed Virgin and St. Joseph remained and pondered each particular of the mystery. Examine to which of these classes you belong, or would wish to belong.

#### FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION—JAN. 1.

##### Christ as Jesus, or Saviour.

“Behold thy Saviour cometh; save me, O God, by Thy name.” (Is. lxii. 11; Ps. liii. 3.)

I. “His name was called Jesus” (Luke ii. 21), that is, Saviour. With good reason did He receive this name; for on this day He first shed His blood, which was to be completely drained from His sacred body on Calvary. On that occasion was fulfilled the prophecy of the Psalmist: “With Him there is plentiful redemption.” (Ps. cxxix. 7.) If the patriarch Joseph, and some others, be styled saviors in Holy Writ, because they delivered the people from famine or temporal death, with how much more reason does this appellation belong to Christ, who has done all that was necessary, on His part, to deliver the whole world from everlasting death! “He shall save His people from their sins.” (Matt. i. 21.)

II. This Saviour will visit you to-day in the holy Eucharist, “to save your soul out of distresses” (Ps. xxx. 8); to deliver you from your spiritual enemies; and to give you strength and courage to surmount every obstacle to salvation. He will purify you with His sacred blood,

which He shed this day. But you must co-operate with His holy designs; for He will not bestow His blessings on unwilling souls. This day has put a termination to the year which you have spent. It cannot return: it is buried in the gulf of eternity. What satisfaction do the misdeeds of the past year now afford you? If you had the year to spend again, how many actions would you omit, which you have done, and how many things would you do which you have omitted to do! While you have, as yet, time, redeem the lost moments; spend the ensuing year as you would wish the past to have been spent, and offer the resolution of doing so to your Lord in the sacrament, as the best present you can make Him on this holy day.

III. You ought to prepare your soul, armed with this resolution, for His coming. You can never keep it without humility; for, as the Prophet says, "He will save the humble of spirit." (Ps. xxxiii. 19.) Everything connected with the mysteries of the Incarnation and Nativity ought to inspire a love of that virtue, and induce you to practise it. This humility, however, must be accompanied with confidence in God. Say, then, with the Royal Prophet, "Show forth Thy wonderful mercies, Thou who savest those who trust in Thee. I am Thine, save me. Uphold Thy servant unto good. A contrite and humble heart, O God; Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. xvi. 7.; cxviii. 94, 122; l. 19.)

## JANUARY 2.

### Our Lord's Circumcision.—I.

I. Christ was not subject to the law of circumcision; because He was incapable of contracting original sin, and circumcision was its remedy. He wished, nevertheless,

to undergo this painful ceremony. 1. To honor the law in His own person. 2. Not to offend others by His singularity. 3. That He might declare Himself to be the son of Abraham, whose descendants this law regarded. Lastly, that, whilst yet an infant, He might show, by His sufferings, His love for mankind. There can be no better proof of love than to suffer for the person whom you love. Learn from the example of Christ a respect for the law of God; to do virtuous works of supererogation; to despise human respect; and, by mortifying yourself, to prove your love of your suffering Saviour.

II. The divine Infant willingly offers Himself to His eternal Father, to satisfy for your transgressions: He patiently suffers the pain of circumcision, and rejoices because He is promoting your salvation. Excite your heart to suffer something for Christ, who suffered so much for you. Undergo cheerfully, in the first place, that mortification which is necessary for the observance of the law of God in general, and for the performance of your own particular duty. Add to this, voluntary acts of mortification, from a spirit of imitating Christ and atoning for past sins.

III. The chief virtues which Christ exercised in His circumcision were obedience, humility, and charity. He was not bound by the law, yet He subjected Himself to it. And since circumcision was an acknowledgment of subjection to the whole law, he undertook to observe it entirely. Circumcision was the remedy of original sin, and, consequently, an acknowledgment of having contracted it. Christ could neither sin, nor contract it. He received, however, the stigma of it. Wonderful humility! His charity for us prompted Him to undergo all these pains. His love of us did not induce Him to seek for glory and honor; but for mortification and punishment,

even in His infancy. Let such obedience, humility, and charity, prompt you to be a follower of Christ—not in word only, but in fact.

### **JANUARY 3.**

#### **Our Lord's Circumcision.—II.**

I. "His name was called Jesus." (Luke ii. 21.) After the painful act of circumcision, a name is given Him, which is "above every name." (Phil. ii. 10.) God honors those who suffer for His sake, and exalts those who humble themselves. Observe with what reverence His divine mother pronounces His name, at the utterance of which "every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." Contemplate the joy of all the celestial spirits, particularly of His blessed mother, who might well say with the Prophet, "I will joy in God my Jesus." (Habac. iii. 18.) Do you rejoice, also, in this sacred name: you have special reasons to do so, "for there is not salvation in any other name." (Acts iv. 12.)

II. Consider the excellencies of this divine name of Jesus, or Saviour. As Saviour, He has freed us from our most powerful enemy. To overcome that proud foe, He has displayed His wisdom, by appearing in the form of a servant, and by concealing under that form the nature of God. As our Redeemer, He has suffered, to release us from bondage. This Saviour has manifested His sanctity in freeing others from sin, by assuming the punishment Himself. He has proved His divinity; for no one but God could satisfy for the debt due in consequence of sin. His dominion, then, extends over all redeemed mankind. Do not attempt, therefore, to withdraw your-

self from it, by pursuing a conduct different from that which He held.

III. What reverence is due to this sacred name, and, consequently, how much you ought to honor it! You ought not to be content with honoring it yourself, but you ought to labor in increasing its honor among others. You ought first to begin, however, by yourself: "And whatsoever ye do in word or in work, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Coloss. iii. 17.) If you do not act in this manner, you ought to be afraid of pronouncing that holy name. "Let every one who nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Say, therefore, with the Prophet, "Help us, O God our Saviour; and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us, and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake." (Ps. lxxviii. 9.)

#### JANUARY 4.

#### **Spiritual Circumcision.—I.**

I. Every Christian ought to be spiritually circumcised, according to the example of his Lord and Master. This spiritual circumcision is enjoined in the words of the prophet Jeremias: "Be circumcised to the Lord, in your hearts, ye men of Juda and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest my indignation come forth like fire, and burn, and there be no one that can quench it, because of the wickedness of your thoughts." (Jer. iv. 4.) Convince yourself of the necessity of this spiritual circumcision and put it in practice, lest you incur the indignation of heaven.

II. This circumcision, as St. Bernard says, must extend itself to the whole man. Examine your heart, therefore, narrowly; cut off all inordinate passions, and every superfluity, which may prevent your spiritual

progress. In the first place, you must destroy all obstinacy of judgment and opinion, which is the source and origin of infinite evils. From this flow all heresies, schisms, and all illusions of the devil; all dissensions and strifes are referred to this. Detest this obstinacy, therefore, as the bane of all virtue. Learn to submit your judgment, therefore, to the Church, your superiors and directors, who hold the place of God. "Lean not upon thy own judgment, and be not wise in thy own conceit. (Prov. iii. 5, 7.)

III. This circumcision must extend itself particularly to self-love, which is the greatest enemy of salvation. It blinds the understanding, and inflames the mind with "many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9.) Such are the desires of possessing wealth, of enjoying the conveniences of life, of being honored and esteemed by men, of being preferred before others; again, the desire of vain and unprofitable knowledge, and the love of vanity and pleasures. "Cut off," therefore, all these passions, "and cast them from you." (Matt. v. 30.) Deny yourself, and follow Christ.

#### JANUARY 5.

#### **Spiritual Circumcision.—II.**

I. This spiritual circumcision ought not only to extend itself to the inward man; but, also, to the external senses! Reflect how many souls have lost the end of their creation by a single glance of the eye. How many others have perished by the indulgence of the other senses! Restrain your eyes, therefore, from all improper or dangerous objects; your ears from everything that savors of vanity or curiosity, and much more of immodesty,

murmuring, and detraction. Regulate your taste, by refraining from excess in eating and drinking; "for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink." (Rom. xiv. 17.)

II. You must not omit to circumcise the vices of the tongue, and to cut off all detraction and murmuring, and whatever tends to sow and propagate discord. Correct everything in your conversation which is contentious, injurious, impertinent, or unseemly. Never speak with disrespect of God and holy things. Avoid flattery, double-dealing, and dissimulation. Remember you are a follower of Christ, of whom it is said, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Pet. ii. 22.) Examine yourself on each of these particulars, and pray with holy David, "Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth and a door round about my lips." (Ps. cxl. 3.) For "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." But, on the contrary, "if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James iii. 2, and i. 26.)

III. You must finally extend this spiritual circumcision to all superfluities regarding the body, as clothing, sleep, amusements, and the other conveniences of life. "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," says the Apostle. (1 Tim. vi. 8.) Divest yourself, then, of all these superfluities, in order that you may become more like Christ, who said of Himself, "I am poor, and in labors from my youth." (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.)



**EPIPHANY—JANUARY 6.****Christ to be Adored with Offerings.**

“Behold, the sovereign Lord cometh: take with thee presents and go to meet Him.” (Intr. Miss. and 4 Kings viii. 8.)

I. “The Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the testament whom you desire, shall come to His temple. Behold, He cometh, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. iii. 1.) Christ is the supreme Lord of the whole earth, to whom all mankind, both princes and their people, are to pay tribute and acknowledgment of His sovereignty. This obligation the Wise Men of the East understood by divine instinct, and they accordingly came this day to offer their gifts. “We have seen His star in the east, and have come to adore Him: and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matt. ii. 2, 11.)

II. This sovereign Lord will visit you to-day, to receive your tribute and your presents. “Take with thee presents, and go to meet Him.” Consider what kind of gifts you can offer Him. “No one,” says the author of Deuteronomy, “shall appear with his hands empty before the Lord; but every one shall offer what he hath.” (Deut. xvi. 16.)

III. You must prepare a throne in your heart, on which to receive and adore your Lord when He comes. Offer Him the three powers of your soul: your memory, understanding, and will. Your memory cannot be pleasing to God if your imagination be not corrected and chastened according to the law of God. Your understanding cannot be acceptable to Him, unless you bend it implicitly to the obedience of faith. God will reject the offer-

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ing of your will, unless it be conformable to His own. Offer Him, besides, the "gold" of charity and love; the "frankincense" of prayer, and the "myrrh" of mortification. Offer Him the sacrifice of your predominant passion and ruling propensities. In fine, give Him as much as you can; for it will be returned with increase.

### **SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.**

*[This Sunday's meditation must be inserted in its proper place,  
which will vary every year.]*

### **Christ the Teacher of Justice.**

"I am the Lord thy God, who teach thee profitable things. Show, O Lord! Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths." (Is. xlviii. 17 and Ps. xxiv. 4.)

I. Christ was found in the midst of the doctors, "hearing them, and asking them questions." (Luke ii. 46.) Christ is your doctor or teacher,—not of profane erudition, but of spiritual knowledge and justice. Hence the prophet says of Him: "Ye, O children of Sion, rejoice and be joyful in the Lord your God, because He has given you a teacher of justice." (Joel ii. 23.) He Himself invites us by the mouth of royal David to listen to a lesson on the fear of God. "Come, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Ps. xxxiii. 12.)

II. This science of justice as far excels every earthly science, as the eternal kingdom of God excels the transitory kingdoms of this world. Worldly knowledge cannot save us—it may increase our reprobation, if we abuse it—but the science of the Saints alone can make us happy. Learn, hence, to appreciate the benefit of possessing this

teacher of your soul. "For blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach him out of Thy law." (Ps. xciii. 12.)

III. Christ sat in the temple, amongst the doctors. Take care that you make your soul a "temple of the living God" (2 Cor. vi. 16), and not a temple of sin. Let it be a house of prayer, and not of worldly occupation, not "a den of thieves," that is, of vain thoughts, which rob God of the honor which is due to Him alone. Then, with all humility, fall at the feet of your teacher with Magdalen, and entreat Him to show you the ways of salvation: "For those who approach to His feet shall receive of His doctrine." (Deut. xxxiii. 3.) Lastly, approach Him with an eagerness to learn, a resolution to practise the lessons, which He will give you, lest He abandon you to yourself, as He threatened Jerusalem by the mouth of His prophet: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee." (Jer. vi. 8.)

#### JANUARY 7, OR 8.

#### **Journey of the Wise Men.—I.**

I. At the birth of Christ a miraculous star appeared in the East: and as the eternal Father revealed the birth of His Son to the Jews by an angel, He made it known to the Gentiles by the appearance of this star; for Christ was the Saviour both of the Jews and Gentiles. Congratulate the new-born Saviour, that His glory is made known to the most remote nations: and give thanks to God, that "He hath revealed His justice in the sight of the Gentiles." (Ps. xcvi. 2.) These Wise Men were the first-fruits of the Gentiles, and they were your representatives.

II. This star appeared to all in the East; but observe how few took the pains to consider it, to obey the call of God, and to seek for the new-born Saviour. Thus, "many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. xxii. 14.) There are many, to this very day, so entirely immersed in worldly affairs that they neglect the light of divine inspiration. They make a thousand excuses, and conjure up a thousand difficulties, saying with the sluggard in the Proverbs, "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the midst of the streets." (Prov. xxii. 13.) But, as Job observes, "upon them that fear the hoar frost, the snow shall fall" (Job. vi. 16), that is, those who are too much concerned for temporal losses will incur that which is irrevocable and eternal.

III. Consider the singular benefit which was bestowed upon the Wise Men, that they alone, above all others, should be efficaciously called to seek and find Christ. Such is the happiness which you enjoy, in preference to so many thousands around, who do not seek Christ as they ought, and have not found Him. You, above so many others, God has "called out of darkness into His admirable light." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) Be grateful for the favor which you have received. Ponder how the sages, having overcome every difficulty, commence their journey: and how they exhort each other on the way. Observe how the star goes before them, and directs their steps. The assistance of God is never wanting to those who, like the Wise Men, undertake any enterprise in the service of God, with courage and resolution. The sages followed the lead of the star. Imitate them, and follow those guides which God and His Church have given you.

JANUARY 8, OR 9.

**Journey of the Wise Men.—II.**

I. When the Wise Men came near Jerusalem, the star that had accompanied them disappeared, to try their faith and constancy. Thus does God often withdraw spiritual consolations from His servants, in order that they may feel that these are pure gifts of God, and not their own, and that their patience and fidelity to Him may be increased. The sages might have been troubled at the disappearance of the star, but they did not, therefore, desist from their journey. Imitate their conduct; and, in the absence of spiritual comfort, have recourse to ordinary means, and inquire of others, with the spouse in the Canticles, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth?" (Cant. iii. 3.) The Church, anxious for your spiritual welfare, has given you abundant means of finding Him.

II. The Wise Men, having entered the city, boldly inquire, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" (Matt. ii. 2.) Meditate on their singular faith: they entertain no doubt concerning the fact, and only wish to be informed of the place. They were not afraid, even in the royal city, and under the eye of Herod himself, to make inquiries concerning another king. They were not ashamed openly to confess Christ, and to acknowledge that they came to do Him homage. "We have seen His star," they said, "in the east, and have come to adore Him." Learn to act in the same manner, and, with St. Paul, "Not to be ashamed of the Gospel." (Rom. i. 16.)

III. "And King Herod hearing this, was troubled." (Matt. ii. 3.) Thus the impious always grieve when they ought to rejoice: "They are glad when they have done

evil, and rejoice in most wicked things." (Prov. ii. 14.) Reflect whether you do not sometimes repine, and feel inward trouble, when approaching festivities remind you of preparing for the sacraments, or when you are called upon to perform something of greater perfection, because you are unwilling to lose anything of your wonted liberty. "And all Jerusalem with him." (Matt. ii. 3.) Thus, inferiors often imitate the conduct of their superiors, particularly in what is wrong. Ponder the evil resulting from this kind of conduct; and, if you have been guilty, correct it. Learn to rejoice, too, only in those things that regard your salvation, and give good example to those who have a right to expect it from you.

**JANUARY 9, OR 10.****Herod's Inquiry after Christ.**

I. "And assembling together all the chief priests, and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born." (Matt. ii. 4.) The children of this world are more anxious in their temporal concerns than are the children of light in regard to those of heaven. Observe the conduct of the king: "Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, inquired of them diligently the time of the star's appearing to them." (Matt. ii. 7.) He was more anxious to find Christ, in order to destroy Him, than you are to love Him and serve Him. Reflect on the wonderful providence of God, which, drawing good from evil, makes even the wicked concur to its divine designs, and to our good. The evil intentions of Herod manifested Christ to the sages, and by them to the Gentile world, whilst he was doing all in his power to conceal Him and to destroy Him.

II. The priests and scribes pointed out the place of His birth, saying, "In Bethlehem of Juda; for so it is written by the prophet." (Matt. ii. 5.) But they themselves would not attempt to find Him. Miserable wretches, they perish near the fountain of life, which they have shown to others. This is the case with all those who instruct others in the ways of justice, and will not follow them themselves. "They are like those who built the ark of Noe," says St. Augustine: "they built that in which others might escape the deluge, and they themselves perished in the waters." Remark, that Christ is not to be found in the chief city or at the palace; but in Bethlehem, and in a manger. "He is not found in the land of those who live in delights." (Job xxviii. 13.)

III. Consider the words of Herod to the sages: "Go and search diligently after the child: and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him." (Matt. ii. 8.) Thus did this sacrilegious hypocrite profess to adore Christ in His words, whilst in his heart he had destined Him to destruction. But God defeated his designs. Herod did not think of sending a messenger with them, to inform himself of all the particulars. Thus God proves that "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord" (Prov. xxi. 30), "who catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked." (Job v. 13.)

JANUARY 10, OR 11.

### **Arrival of the Wise Men at Bethlehem.**

I. The sages, "when they had heard the king, went their way." (Matt. ii. 9.) They lose no time in seeking

Christ; but, having informed themselves where they might find Him, they leave the city, with all its curiosities and entertainments, to pursue their journey. Oh that you would seek Christ as earnestly as they did, and not suffer yourself to be distracted with worldly considerations. "And, behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them." Thus, God is accustomed to be more liberal of His heavenly illustrations, in proportion as we withdraw ourselves from the trouble and noise of worldly affairs. "The star went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was: And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matt. ii. 9), especially when they saw it point out the place where they were to find the object of their longing desires.

II. "And going into the house, they found the child with Mary His mother." Meditate on their admirable faith, which was not diminished by what they saw—a loathsome stable, and an infant lying in a manger. Consider the tears of devotion, which the humiliating condition of the place, the poverty which was exhibited, then the beauty of the Infant, and the Virgin's modesty, inspired. Reflect how they were struck with admiration to see the King of kings and Lord of lords (as they now knew that He was) lying in a manger, on a bed of straw!

III. "And falling down they adored Him." (Matt. ii. 11.) They prostrated themselves before Him, with a most profound humility, as well interior as exterior: and acknowledged their own unworthiness, their subjection to Him, and their dependence on Him. They adored Him with a most perfect act of adoration, as their sovereign Lord and God. This adoration was accompanied with an entire oblation of themselves and all their pos-



sessions, united with sincere expressions of gratitude, as well for their own particular favor as for the general benefits resulting from His incarnation, and the vocation of the Gentiles. To these they added the most ardent affections of love and desire, that all the world might know and serve their new-born King. Observe what admirable effects a lively faith produces in the soul; and learn with what affections you ought to approach the same Lord in the Eucharist.

JANUARY 11, OR 12.

**Offerings of the Wise Men.**

I. "And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh." With the above-mentioned affections of faith, reverence, and love, they offer gifts to their supreme Lord, the most valuable that they had in their treasures, in order that you may learn to employ the best things, and not the worst, in the divine service. Consider the gifts of the Wise Men in particular: and present yours conjointly with theirs. They offer *gold*, as a tribute to their King and their Lord. Offer Him, on your part, the gold of charity; for as gold is the most precious of metals, so is charity the queen of virtues. Present to Him all your earthly possessions, with an affection and love of poverty, considering them as nothing in comparison with His divine service; and be ready to leave all, rather than offend Him even venially.

II. They offer *frankincense* to Him, as an acknowledgment of His divinity. Offer you, also, the frankincense of fervent and frequent prayer. Say with David, "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight." (Ps.

cxl. 2.) Present to Him, also, the obedience of your will, as a precious perfume in His holy sight, by submission to your superiors, governors, and directors, as the vicegerents of God. There is no sacrifice more pleasing to Him than when the will is offered by obedience; "for, obedience is better than sacrifices." (1 Kings xv. 22.)

III. They offer *myrrh*, as adapted to His human nature. On your part, you must offer Him the myrrh of mortification, by chastising your body, with St. Paul, and bringing it under obedience to the Spirit. Offer Him, also, in a particular manner, the myrrh of chastity; for as myrrh preserves dead bodies from corruption, so does chastity preserve the bodies and minds of the living from being defiled. In fine, consecrate your whole self to God: and offer Him whatever you are in possession of; for everything that you have is derived from Him.

### Return of the Wise Men.\*

I. The Wise Men, having performed their homage and adoration, were ready to return, filled with spiritual joy and exultation at the Incarnation. They wished to bring others to the knowledge of Christ, and amongst the rest even Herod himself; but they were admonished in their sleep not to return the same way that they came. Hence you may learn that God takes special care of those who are His own: and that He can easily frustrate the most subtle machinations of the wicked. Learn, also, that in the way of virtue every motion that

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\* If the Octave of Epiphany fall on Sunday, this meditation, which is intended for that day, should be made on Saturday, and the next one, page 119, on Sunday.

seems to be the product of virtuous zeal ought not to be followed. For the Apostle admonishes us to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God" (1 John iv. 1); and St. Paul tells us that even "Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi. 14.)

II. The sages immediately obeyed the admonition, and "went back another way" into their own country. (Matt. i. 12.) Such ought to be our obedience to the inspirations of God, when He calls us to a more perfect knowledge of Himself, or to pursue a life of greater exactness and perfection. "We have deviated from our heavenly country," says St. Gregory, "by pleasures; and we should return to it by the way of sorrow and repentance." Reflect what joy the visit of the Magi gave to the blessed Virgin, and what delight she felt in seeing her Son adored by them, and the prophecy fulfilled—"The kings of Tharsis and the Islands shall offer presents; the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts." (Ps. lxxi. 10.) Recommend yourself earnestly to her, and say, with St. Bernard, "By you, O Virgin Mother! permit us to have access to your Son."

III. The divine Infant did not suffer the Wise Men to go away without being rewarded for their pains and devotion. He bestowed upon them supernatural gifts, in return for theirs. For their gold, He gave them the rich treasures of wisdom and charity; for their frankincense, the gifts of prayer and devotion; for their myrrh, His divine grace, which is a sovereign antidote against the corruptions of sinful nature. You can give nothing to God which He will not return with immense profit to yourself. The more you give, therefore, the more you will receive. Be liberal, then, to God, in order that He may be generous to you—remembering the sentence of

the Apostle, "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly." (2 Cor. ix. 6.)\*

**SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.**

**Christ the Spouse of your Soul.**

"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet Him." (Matt. xxv. 6.)

I. "The third day, there was a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee." (John ii. 1.) A similar event will take place to-day, between Christ and your soul, in the holy Eucharist, provided you assent to it, according to His words uttered by Osee: "I will espouse thee to Me forever, and I will espouse thee to Me in justice, and judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in tender mercies." (Osee ii. 19.) Although you have frequently been faithless to your heavenly Spouse, by entertaining inordinate affections, and cherishing undue attachment to creatures, He is nevertheless ready to pardon you, and He even invites a renewal of your affection by His prophet: "Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers: nevertheless, return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee." (Jer. iii. 1.)

II. How highly worldly characters consider themselves honored by being espoused to great or noble personages! How much greater is your honor, when you are espoused to the King of heaven! Reflect on the heavenly

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\* If any days remain between the Octave and the second Sunday after Epiphany, the meditations on the preceding pages (110 to 117) are to be repeated according to the number of days. If a whole week remain; then, on Monday, take the Meditation of the Purification, page 120, and proceed with the following in order, omitting that of the second Sunday, after the Epiphany, until it comes in its proper place.

beauty of your divine Spouse, and say to Him: "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men." (Ps. xlv. 3.) Meditate on His dignity, glory, riches, wisdom, and power; and inflame your heart with an ardent love for your holy Spouse.

III. Since you are to be espoused to Christ, you must surrender to Him everything which you have in this world, and never forsake Him by sin, on any consideration. Adorn your soul, then, with every virtue, or you never will be pleasing in the eyes of your divine Spouse. Direct all your thoughts and actions according to His will, and study His pleasure in everything.

#### MONDAY.

### **Purification of the Virgin.**

I. The blessed Virgin, after having buried herself in retirement for forty days after the birth of her Son, appears in the temple, in compliance with a double law, that ordained her own purification and the presentation of her child. The law, in fact, did not regard her, for she conceived by the Holy Ghost; but she subjected herself to it in order to imitate the conduct of her Son, who submitted to the law of circumcision. Besides, she was unwilling to give offence or scandal to the Jews, who were ignorant of the great mystery which had been operated in her. She was anxious, also, to conform her conduct in what was lawful to that of others of her sex, and thus to avoid singularity, as well as to perform works of greater perfection and supererogation. Study to imitate her example.

II. What admirable virtues she exercised in this action! Her obedience was perfect; for she fulfilled exactly what the law required of others, without pleading exemption,

privilege, or dispensation, when she might lawfully have done so. Oh that you would imitate her conduct, even in things which you are obliged to perform! Her profound humility dictated the propriety of concealing her mysterious conception, and the birth of her Son, and of being considered unclean. Be ashamed of your pride, which prompts you to wish for the esteem of others and the reputation of sanctity, whilst you ought to acknowledge yourself a sinner, as did the Prophet: "We are all become as one unclean; we are fallen as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." (Is. lxiv. 6.)

III. Consider her incomparable purity, in which virtue, although she excelled every other creature, still, from a desire of becoming more pure, she performed the ceremonial purification which the law required in others. Learn hence to cherish that virtue, and continually to improve in it, however perfect you may conceive yourself to be. Ponder, in fine, her singular devotion in hastening to the temple, to offer in a solemn manner to the eternal Father His and her only Son. Mark this conduct, and imitate it, as often as you are present at the solemn sacrifice of the Mass.

## TUESDAY.

### Christ's Presentation.

I. "After the days of her purification were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord." (Luke ii. 22.) Ponder the acts of virtue, which the divine mother exercised on this occasion, viz., of faith, devotion, and thanksgiving, towards God; and of charity, in relation to mankind, for whom she offered her own son. Reflect how the divine Infant rejoiced that the moment had arrived which He had so earnestly

longed for, in which He was to be publicly presented to His eternal Father, as a living sacrifice for the sins of the whole world—and yours in particular. This action was infinitely acceptable to the eternal Father Himself; for if at the offerings of Noe and other just men “the Lord smelled a sweet savor” (Gen. viii. 21), with what complacency must He have looked down on this oblation of His beloved Son in the arms of His holy mother !

II. “And to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.” Observe how the blessed Virgin does not disdain the idea of being considered poor; for this was the offering specified for that class of the community; nor the idea of being reputed a sinner. Be not ashamed, then, to own either character, and follow her example. Ponder the import of those gifts, which God required. By the turtle-doves, mourning is signified; by the pigeons, simplicity; and by the lamb, mildness. With these virtues, present yourself to God, and the offering will be acceptable.

III. Christ’s parents, to fulfil the law, “redeem their son with five sicles,” (Exod. xiii. 13 and Lev. xxvii. 6), although the Evangelists are silent on the subject. Reflect who the person is that buys Him. His holy mother: and she purchases him for our sakes. Of whom does she purchase Him? From his eternal Father to whom He has been presented. Thus, He wishes His divine Son to be ours by a double title. Oh that you were as liberal to God as He is to you! What was the price ordained by the law? Five sicles, or pieces of silver. Reflect how easily you may make God your own: and blush for your folly, in refusing to give the pains and labors to God, which you bestow on idle vanities and transitory pleasures.

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**WEDNESDAY.****Simeon's Prophecy.—I.**

I. "And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout." (Luke ii. 25.) Here the sanctity of those who gave testimony of Christ is described, for there is nothing of greater credit and authority than innocence of life. Simeon was just and devout; afraid of offending God in the least, "for he that feareth God neglecteth nothing." (Eccles. vii. 19.) "He was waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25), by fervent desires and holy aspirations. "And the Holy Ghost was in him," inspiring him to fix his thoughts on God and heavenly things alone, and not on the vain and empty objects which the world presents. Such ought to be the conduct of all good Christians, especially those who, like Simeon, have consecrated themselves to God—"waiting," not for earthly enjoyments, but, as the Apostle says, "for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit. ii. 13.)

II. "And he came by the Spirit into the temple." Reflect on the different motives which induce men to frequent the house of God. Some are actuated by human respect, or led by custom or curiosity. Observe how soon Simeon discovered the Expected of All Nations, whom the ancient patriarchs and prophets had so anxiously desired to see. Observe the veneration and devotion with which the holy man approaches the world's Redeemer. Oh what a flame of divine love must have been enkindled in his heart when he had the Son of God so near! Imitate his veneration and devotion as often as you receive the



same God in the Eucharist, and when you enter into His house.

III. How abundantly the divine Infant recompensed the longing desires of Simeon to see Him! He not only rejoiced him with His corporal presence, but filled his soul with divine grace, producing so powerful an effect as to make him bid adieu to all earthly things, and even to life itself. He burst forth into that admirable canticle: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation." (Luke ii. 29, 30.) Oh that you would also bid farewell to all earthly things, and say with the Apostle, "But I am straitened—having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### Simeon's Prophecy.—II.

I. Consider the words of Simeon regarding Christ: "Behold, this child is set up for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel." (Luke ii. 34.) The Incarnation and birth of Christ will increase the guilt and punishment both of the unbeliever and of those who believe but will not obey His will. To the just they will be the cause of resurrection to eternal life. Reflect in which of these two ways you would wish the birth of Christ to be applied to you; and observe how even the holiest things may be perverted to our own reprobation, if we do not make a proper use of them. Examine your own conduct with fear and trembling, and see if you do not abuse the favors of God and the means of salvation which your state of life affords you.

II. "And for a sign, which shall be contradicted." Wonder at the folly of mankind. Christ is the uncreated

Wisdom of God, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Coloss. ii. 3); and yet men have contradicted, and still contradict, His divine doctrine. His words and actions were continually contradicted, and He was perpetually misrepresented and calumniated, and do you wonder and complain that you are sometimes contradicted and reproved? Learn to suffer patiently, as He did. If you wish to be a disciple of Christ, you must be content to be set up as an object of reproof and contradiction; for "the disciple is not above his master." (Matt. x. 24.)

III. Consider the words which holy Simeon addressed to the Virgin: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (Luke ii. 35.) Ponder how divine Providence mixes sorrow with joy, and amidst the immense pleasure which she must have experienced on seeing such honors bestowed on her Son, he reminds her of her future grief. Admire her singular resignation to the will of Heaven in accepting this piercing sword of sorrow from the hands of God. Imitate her example, and learn not to be immoderately overjoyed in time of consolation and prosperity, but always bear in mind the sorrow that may follow. "In the day of good things," Ecclesiasticus advises, "be not unmindful of evils." (Ecclus. xi. 27.)

#### FRIDAY.

#### **The Prophetess Anna.—I.**

I. The virtues of this holy woman are here proposed for our imitation. After seven years of a married life, she lived continually in the temple, "by fasting and prayer, serving night and day" (Luke ii. 37); and she was then eighty-four years old. Meditate on her great love of purity, her continual exercise of prayer and mortifica-

tion, and her perseverance for so many years in this holy conduct. Compare these virtues with your inconstancy and tepidity; and pray with David, "O Lord, make me know my end—that I may know what is wanting to me." (Ps. xxxviii. 5.)

II. "Now she at the same time coming in, gave praise to the Lord." (Luke ii.) Ponder the sweet providence of God in inspiring her to enter the temple at that very time, and in revealing to her the mystery of His Son's Incarnation. She concurred with the divine inspiration, and did not lose a moment; but immediately hastened to enjoy the blessings which were designed for her. How different is your conduct from hers; how many delays and impediments do you put to divine grace! You know not the hour in which God may have designed some special favor for you: let your mind and heart, then, be always prepared,—you may lose many graces by neglecting one.

III. There were certainly many others in the temple at the same time: but Simeon and Anna alone knew the great mystery of the Incarnation; for the blessed Infant displayed no external appearances of divinity, nor appeared different from ordinary children. Learn from this example to conceal your own good qualities, and not to condemn others from outward appearances. Learn, also, that of all those who approach the holy Eucharist, those only discover the hidden God and relish His heavenly sweetness who appear at the sacred table with the spirit of true and genuine devotion. Finally, learn this all-important truth, that "many are called but few chosen." (Matt. xx. 16.) "Labor, therefore, the more," as St. Peter advises you, "that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Peter i. 10.)

## SATURDAY.

**The Prophetess Anna.—II.**

I. Consider the interior acts of virtue, which this holy woman exercised when she beheld the divine Infant. They were those of faith, hope, and love, then of joy and self-congratulation, together with perfect resignation to the will of God. Take care to imitate her when you appear in the presence of the same God at the Eucharistic table. If you have faith, where is your humility, reverence and devotion? If you hope in Him, where is your resignation to the will of God in crosses and adversities? If you love Him, why do you fix your heart and affections on creatures? If your joy be in Him, why do you seek for satisfaction and happiness in earthly comforts? If you have resigned yourself to His holy will, why do you so often retract and seek your own will?

II. Her affections immediately prompted her "to give praise to the Lord, and to speak of Him to all." She acknowledged Him to be the long-expected Messiah; she admired His humility, extolled His mercy; and she invited all to acknowledge Him, to reverence and love Him as their Lord and Saviour. Oh how true is it that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"! (Matt. xii. 34.) The reason why you are so dumb in the praises of God is because your affections are so cold or tepid. Learn from this holy woman to speak freely of God and heavenly things in your conversation with others. Be not satisfied with enjoying God alone, but endeavor to lead others to Him by word and example.

III. "And His father and mother were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning Him." They admired and adored the providence of God in re-

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vealing these sublime mysteries to a few only, and in concealing them from the rest of mankind. They adored the divine dispensation, when He revealed them to the poor and humble of this world, and concealed them from the great and the proud. "And after they had performed all things, according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee." (Luke ii. 39.) It is your duty to follow their example; to perform "all things according to the law;" and to fulfil the commands of God in what may seem to you of trivial importance. Accompany this holy family home, and observe their religious demeanor on the way. They returned to Bethlehem, where they lived in holy obscurity, and where they endeavored to do their duty in respect to their new-born Saviour.

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

#### Christ the Physician of your Soul.

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved." (Jer. xvii. 14.)

I. Consider, 1st. In the gospel of this day Christ healed the leper, and afterwards the servant of the centurion. (Matt. viii.) He is the universal physician of our souls; for the Prophet tells us of Him, that "He was sent to heal the contrite of heart." (Is. lxi. 1.) And whilst He was upon earth, says His Evangelist, "virtue went out from Him and healed all." (Luke vi. 19.)

II. To how many diseases our fallen nature is subject. "Our fever," writes St. Ambrose, "is covetousness, our fever is sensuality, our fever is rage and anger, etc." Our diseases are as numerous as our vices. Reflect on the imminent danger in which these spiritual diseases con-

tinually place you; for they expose you to eternal death. Consider, also, the difficulty with which they are cured; for they are not like diseases of the body, that show themselves by outward symptoms: they are often concealed even from the patient himself, and are, in a certain manner, engrafted on the constitution of the soul. What a happiness it is to be able whenever you choose to apply to a physician who knows your spiritual complaints most intimately, and who is able and willing to apply sovereign remedies to them!

III. You ought to place great confidence in this spiritual physician of yours. He is eminently skilful and infinitely wise; and, in order that He might have a more experimental knowledge of our infirmities, He united Himself to our nature, "He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." (Is. liii. 4.) He is infinitely compassionate and infinitely desirous of our spiritual health and salvation; and, therefore, of His own accord He asked the man in the gospel, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John v. 6) In order that He may more effectually cure us, He has prepared for us a most admirable medicine, consisting of His own most precious body and blood. Throw yourself, therefore, at His feet, and say with the Prophet, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." (Ps. vi. 2.) Remember He cannot effect a cure in your soul unless you perform punctually whatever He prescribes.

#### MONDAY.

#### **Christ's Flight into Egypt.—I.**

1. How different are the thoughts of God from the thoughts of men! Christ was no sooner born, than sent into banishment. The Almighty could easily have rid

the world of Herod, or have appeased his anger, or have rendered His divine Son invisible; but He adopted the ordinary means of safety, and His Son must fly. Reflect how derogatory this was to the dignity of the Redeemer, and how full of inconveniences. Thus God always treats those whom He loves best. Are you greater or better than the Son of God? Why, then, do you complain when His providence prepares crosses for you? You ought to consider them as marks of His affection; and this thought will render them not only supportable, but even agreeable.

II. God would not have His Son go to the Magi, where He would have been honored and adored; but into Egypt, a pagan nation, and ever hostile to the Israelites; far from home, from His relations and friends. Thus He deprives His Son, even in His infancy, of comfort, help, convenience, which He might otherwise have derived from His friends. Why, then, do you seek with such ardor for the esteem and service of others? Why do you think it hard to suffer inconveniences? If you really loved Christ, you would rejoice, and conceive it honor enough to be neglected and contemned and despised for His sake. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord." (Matt. x. 25.)

III. As Christ would be born far from home, so would He be banished far from His own country. He intended to convey this lesson, that we should always consider ourselves in this world as strangers and exiles, and not as citizens of it; for we know "that we have no permanent city; but we seek one to come." (Heb. xiii. 14.) Those who were afterwards banished for His sake, or suffered anything for Him, might find comfort in His example. Learn to bear all this kind of crosses, and even banishment from your home or country, with pa-

tience and resignation; for "a man of resolution makes every country his own." (Cicero.)

**TUESDAY.****Christ's Flight into Egypt.—II.**

I. "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying, Arise and take the child and His mother, and fly into Egypt." (Matt. ii. 13.) Ponder the particulars of this command. 1. The angel commands in the name of God, who is the supreme Lord. 2. He delivers the command not to Mary, though she was the more worthy; but to Joseph, because he was the head of the family, and its ordinary superior. 3. He appeared to him in sleep, by which we learn, that even while we sleep the care of God is exerted over us, and He is continually watching for our good. 4. He tells him to take the Child and His mother, without mentioning anything else. Oh that Jesus and Mary were your only care! 5. He assigns them the place of their banishment. Learn, hence, not to choose for yourself, but receive everything in the ordinary way of God's providence, and as coming from His hands, in regard to place, employment, prosperity, and adversity.

II. Consider the words of the angel: "Be there until I shall tell thee." (Matt. ii. 13.) He could have told him, determinately, the time which he had to remain in Egypt; but God did not wish it to be known, in order that the Holy Family might depend more on His providence. Learn, hence, to depend exclusively on divine Providence, and not to be too solicitous for the future, in regard to what may or may not happen; for "the steps of man are guided by the Lord." (Prov. xx. 24.) "And He hath given His angels charge over thee, to



keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc. 11.) Follow this conduct, and not your own ways, and you will always live in security.

III. "He arose, and took the child and His mother by night." Reflect on the perfect obedience of St. Joseph. He submitted his judgment, although he might have made many objections against so sudden a departure. He immediately conformed his will, notwithstanding the many difficulties which presented themselves. He promptly and accurately executed the command; he rose that very night, and left all he had, uncertain when he was to return. He performed all this with cheerfulness, because he knew that he was doing the will of God. Compare your obedience with his, and reform whatever is faulty in it. Conform to so bright an example.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ's Flight into Egypt.—III.**

I. "And they retired into Egypt." (Matt. ii. 14.) They commenced their journey without delay. Ponder the tender affections and compassion of the mother for her Child, who even in His infancy began to train Himself to suffer inconveniences and hardships. She resigned herself, notwithstanding, to the will of God. Reflect, also, how this divine Infant offered himself freely to His eternal Father, even in His early days, for banishment and toils and misery. He rejoiced to go into Egypt, to sanctify it by His presence and to destroy its idols. "Behold, the Lord will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt will be moved at His presence." (Is. xix. 1.) Beseech Him to sanctify you in the holy Eucharist, and to destroy the idols of your vicious affections.

II. Consider the sufferings of the Holy Family on the road. Remark their religious demeanor, their pious discourses, and their interior recollection with God, and with what holy resignation they surmount the difficulties of a long and tedious journey, of about two hundred and seventy miles. These sufferings were increased by their poverty and forlorn situation. Compassionate them, and be ashamed of your own delicacy and unwillingness to suffer the least inconvenience for the sake of Christ.

III. They resided, unknown, in Egypt for seven or eight years. Reflect on the life which they led during that time. They performed all their religious duties toward God as far as their banishment in a heathenish country would permit them. They observed perfect charity and union among themselves. During the whole time they were extremely poor, and maintained themselves and the divine Infant by the labor of their hands. They bore in silent patience the evils of banishment and the ill-usage of the Egyptians. Compare your conduct in adversity with theirs; blush at your weakness, and fortify your mind by their example against the entailed and unavoidable miseries of life:

#### THURSDAY.

### **Murder of the Holy Innocents.**

I. "Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the Wise Men, was exceedingly angry, and sending, killed all the male children that were in Bethlehem." (Matt. ii. 16.) Reflect on the barbarous cruelty of this wicked prince, and mark into what enormities ambition plunges the man who blindly pursues it. Form a steady detestation of this vice. But let the wicked rage and devise

vain things against the Lord and against His Christ,—“He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them.” (Ps. ii. 4) Such was the case with Herod; God frustrated his deep-laid designs, and turned them against himself. Learn hence to put implicit confidence in God.

II. The cruelty of his officers surpassed even that of the tyrant himself. Observe how readily they execute the king's command, and murder as many male children as they can find in and about Bethlehem. Blush at the reflection that these bad men were more punctual in doing even a bad action than you in doing good. Conceive the agonized feelings of the poor mothers of these devoted innocents. Let your concern and grief be no less when you have lost your infant God by sin. Christ, though at a great distance, witnessed this barbarous spectacle with compassion, and rejoiced at the future glory of these infants in heaven.

III. Admire the goodness of God, who from the wickedness of men draws advantages for His servants, and who can produce “a honey-comb in the lion's jaw.” (Judg. xiv. 8.) He permitted this slaughter that the innocents might receive the immortal crown of martyrdom. How happy was this for them! If they had lived, perhaps some of them might have been found among those who crucified Christ. Throw yourself with confidence into the arms of Providence, who knows infinitely better how to dispose of yourself and your affairs than you do yourself. Imitate, in your life, the innocence of these infant saints, that you may be “without spot before the throne of God.” (Apoc. xiv. 5.)

## FRIDAY.

**Christ's Return from Egypt.**

I. "When Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel." (Matt. ii. 19.) Joseph was afterwards in a doubt where to fix his abode, for fear of Archelaus, and was admonished to go into Galilee. Remark how short-lived is the prosperity of the wicked, and how quickly changed into eternal adversity. Reflect, too, how God takes peculiar care of the just, removing from them the afflictions which were sent for their greater good, and directing them in all their ways. Therefore, "come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded." (Ps. xxxiii. 6.)

II. "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth." Imagine with what joy they were received by their relations and friends at their return, and admire their singular humility in concealing from them the mysteries relating to the birth of their Son. They knew that God would reveal them at the proper time. Christ, in Holy Writ, is called a "Nazarite," which signifies a flower; and He Himself prompted the author of the Cantic of Canticles to speak in His person, and say, "I am the flower of the field" (Cant. ii. 1.), that is, not born of that parent which the world would call noble and great, but of ordinary extraction; "and the lily of the valleys," and not of the mountains. By these expressions He insinuates that He is spiritually born, not in proud and exalted, but in humble souls. Descend then into the valley of humility, and in this humble state present your God with

the lily of chastity. The giver and his gift will then be acceptable to Him.

III. Many follow Jesus the Nazarene, but few Jesus the crucified. They willingly adhere to Him in prosperity, but when adversity frowns they immediately abandon Him. They are willing to share His kingdom, but not His sufferings; they admire His crown, but not His cross. Remember it is your duty to follow Christ in all His characters, and to shrink from no difficulty.

#### SATURDAY.

### **A Summary of the Virtues which Christ exercised in His Infancy.**

After having meditated in detail the mysteries of Christ's Incarnation and Nativity, it will be well to collect in one point of view the chief virtues which He exercised, and contemplate their united lustre.

1. He displayed a sovereign *contempt of the world*. He was born privately in the night, without pomp and attendants, and unknown to all. When born He was visited by poor shepherds. He afterward lived in obscurity and banishment, contemning the world and all its conveniences, and unknown to all.

2. His *humility* was equally great. Though the God of infinite majesty, He assumed the body of a helpless infant, and was an outcast in Bethlehem. He became a companion of beasts in the stable. He assumed the character of a sinner at His circumcision. Well might He say by His prophet: "I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.)

3. His *poverty* corresponded with His humility. "Be-

ing rich He became poor for your sake." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) He was almost deprived of the necessities of life, and among those things which he used he always chose the meanest and the worst. His dwelling was a stable, a manger was His bed, a poor virgin was His mother, and His reputed father was a needy carpenter. Reverence and imitate His example, "that through His poverty ye may be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

4. His practice of *obedience* was most perfect. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient, unto death." (Phil. ii. 8.) His birth at Bethlehem was an actual exercise of obedience to the imperial edict of Cæsar. He was obedient to the laws of circumcision and presentation, although He was not bound by them, and in "all things was subject to His parents." (Luke ii. 51.)

5. His *patience* was divinely heroic. Although by the right of His divine nature He was impassible, and by His innocence undeserving of punishment; He suffered, however, in His tenderest years all the inconveniences of cold, hunger, infirmity, and want; the pains of circumcision, the hardships of travelling, and the miseries of banishment. Since He was born with the use of reason, He was infinitely more sensible of these hardships than other children are.

6. His *love of God, and charity towards His neighbor*, were infinite. He directed all His sufferings to the glory of the former and the advantage of the latter. His tears and blood were shed, at His circumcision, to atone for our sins. He assumed to Himself our infirmities and miseries, not by constraint, but by His own choice, to satisfy for them, and to give us examples of every virtue. Return Him, therefore, love for love. Learn to condemn the world, to be humble and obedient. Suffer want and hardships with patience; and in fine, in all these seek the

greater glory of God and the spiritual advantage of your neighbor.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

### Christ the Peace of your Soul.

"Save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul."  
(Ps. lxxviii. 1.)

I. In the Gospel of to-day, Christ is recorded to have appeased the tempest on the sea. We are on a tempestuous sea as long as we exist in this world; we are continually harassed by storms: the winds of temptation blow, and raise the waves of our passions and concupiscences. If we suffer these waves to increase, we cannot subdue them, and we shall infallibly perish. "The wicked," says the Prophet, "are like the raging sea, which cannot rest." (Is. lvii. 20.) How many human beings, of every state, condition, and sex, are swallowed up in this ocean, never again to emerge from it!

II. Nothing but the protecting hand of God can secure us. "He alone rules the power of the sea, and appeases the motion of the waves thereof." (Ps. lxxxviii. 10.) He is the peace and tranquillity of the soul, and appeases its turbulent motions at His pleasure; for in the Gospel of to-day, "He commanded the winds of the sea, and there came a great calm." (Matt. viii. 26.) He will do the same to-day in your soul, if you receive Him as you ought.

III. God often permits us to be tossed to and fro with the waves of trouble and the winds of temptation, while He himself seems to sleep, in order to try our constancy and increase our glory. Besides, He is much pleased at the confidence which we place in Him on such occasions. He reprehended St. Peter for his want of confidence

when He said to him, "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (Matt. xiv. 31.) Examine with what temptations and passions you are most assailed; and approaching Him with confidence at the Eucharistic table, cry out with the Apostles, "Lord, save us: we perish" (Matt. viii. 25); or with holy David, "Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up" (Ps. lxviii. 16).

### MONDAY.

#### **Christ's Going to the Temple.—I.**

I. The Jewish law required that thrice in the year every male should present himself before the Lord at Jerusalem. Hence St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin also went: he, from a motive of obedience to the law; she, of devotion to the house of God. Christ accompanied them both to glorify the eternal Father, and to give Him solemn thanks for all His benefits received, as well general as particular, in consequence of the institution of the law. Learn, hence, to visit the house of God willingly, and to behave in it with all the respect that the sanctity of the place requires.

II. "His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch." (Luke ii. 41.) Learn, hence, constancy and perseverance in good works. They did not present themselves in the house of God through custom, although the custom was a good one, but they were actuated by a spirit of real devotion. Such should be your case when you are employed in things that regard the service of God, particularly when you frequent the sacraments. Nothing in religion should be done merely from custom or human respect.

III. "And after they had fulfilled the days, the child



Jesus remained in Jerusalem." Our Saviour here gives us an example of renouncing the ties of flesh and blood when the service and honor of God are concerned. Hence, upon another occasion, He observed: "He who loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matt. x. 37.) All earthly friends are to be left for God, if He require it; and every advice of theirs to the contrary ought to be rejected, as proceeding from the enemies of God. Hence St. Jerome exclaims: "Trample over your father, trample over your mother, and with dry cheeks fly to the standard of the cross."

## TUESDAY.

### Christ's Going to the Temple.—II.

I. Consider how Christ was employed during those three days. He was wholly occupied in divine things, in prayer and in conversation with the Doctors. Many spiritual writers think that He lived during those days without any other food than that which He procured by begging. This He did from His extreme love of poverty, and to fulfil the expression of the Prophet: "I am a beggar, and poor: the Lord is careful for Me." (Ps. xxxix. 18.)

II. Meditate on the behavior of Christ among the doctors. The modesty of His countenance, words, and actions won their admiration to so great a degree, that they admitted the divine Youth into their company. With all humility He asked them questions, and listened to their answers as a scholar and not a teacher, although He was the Wisdom of the Divinity Himself. His questions were prudent, and the answers that He gave to their questions astonished them. He zealously sought the glory of His Father in all this, and He did not act from ostentation. How contrary is the conduct of most schol-

ars. They are ever on the watch to discover an opportunity of displaying their little knowledge, forgetful that knowledge is a dangerous thing because man has so many natural inclinations to abuse it.

III. How his affectionate parents grieved at the absence of their Son! With all humility they ascribe this absence to their own fault. It was no fault of theirs: but the man who is truly humble will sometimes attribute to himself more of fault than is his due. They immediately began to search for Him with amorous sorrow. They have recourse to God in prayer, and beg Him to restore their dear Son. It frequently happens that we lose Christ in the day of prosperity, and that we do not discover our loss until the dark night of adversity arrives. Beg of God never to abandon you, and say with His Prophet, "Forsake me not, O Lord my God; do not thou depart from me." (Ps. xxxvii. 22.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ Sought for by His Parents.**

I. What great care the Virgin and St. Joseph took in seeking for their Son, who did not appear, during the first night of their journey! "And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him." (Luke ii. 45.) They passed by no place on their return, and omitted inquiring in no part of the city where they thought it probable He might be found. Well might the Virgin express her feelings in the words of the Canticle: "Show me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou liest in the mid-day in the streets, and in the broad ways." (Cant. i. 6.) Mark with what fervor you ought to seek for your God, either when you have lost His personal presence by mortal sin, or His gracious familiarity by tepidity.

II. The anxious parents could not find their Son among His kindred or acquaintance. Hence you are to infer that you ought to divest yourself of all inordinate affection for your kindred, country, and friends if you desire to enjoy the company of your Jesus. St. Bernard justly inquires: "How shall I find you, my good Jesus, among my own kindred, when you could not be found among your own?"

III. He was not to be found either in the more agreeable, or more honorable, or more frequented walks of life. Nor did the spouse in the Cantic find her beloved in "the bed" of ease and pleasure, nor in the "broad ways" of distraction, dissipation, and forgetfulness of God. Christ was found at last in the temple, among the Doctors. Seek your Lord, then, in His church, by fervent prayer, and, though you do not immediately find Him, persevere in the search; for, as the Wise Man observes, "Wisdom is easily seen by those that love her, and is found by them that seek her." (Wis. vi. 13.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### Christ Found by His Parents.

I. "And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple." (Luke ii. 46.) Imagine what joy the holy Virgin felt when she at last discovered her Son in the temple. We seldom know how to appreciate a blessing until we have lost it; and when we regain it, our joy is complete. This is the case in worldly blessings; let it be so in those which are of a spiritual and more elevated nature. When you have regained the grace of God after having lost it by sin, pour out your whole soul in thanksgiving, and cautiously avoid the danger of a similar loss.

II. The Blessed Virgin addressed her Son: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" (Luke ii. 48.) In this expression there was no complaint against His conduct, but an amorous manifestation of her past sorrow and present happiness. Such was the expression of Christ to His Father: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.) "Behold," continues the Virgin, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Observe her humility: she styles her spouse, though only the reputed father, the "father" of her divine Son. She names him first, though far unequal in dignity, to teach you to prefer others to yourself. They sought for Him sorrowing, and therefore they found Him; "for those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Ps. cxxv. 5.)

III. Consider the answer which Christ made to His blessed mother: "Did you not know that I must be about those things that are My Father's?" (Luke ii. 49.) A divine sentiment, and deserving of our continual recollection. We are to prefer, then, the service of God to every other affair whatever, and to every other service and duty. Frequently examine yourself, if you are occupied in the things that are your father's. If you are not, you are losing your time, and trifling with the best gift of a bountiful and just Providence.

#### FRIDAY.

#### **Christ is Obedient to His Parents.—I**

I. Our divine Model having now performed the will of His Father, notwithstanding His love of solitude, prayer, and the immediate worship of God in the temple, "went down with His parents, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (Luke ii. 51.) From this action we learn a very important lesson; viz., that the

most exalted and sublime actions are not always the most pleasing to God; that the highest degree of virtue is to submit ourselves to others; and that we ought to conform our exterior to the condition of our calling, and to perform the ordinary actions which belong to that calling with perfection. "And His mother kept all these words in her heart." Do you also keep the word of God in your heart, and it will preserve you.

II. What an admirable example of obedience is conveyed in these short words: "and He was subject to them"! Ponder with St. Bernard, "who, and to whom? God, to men: God, to whom the angels are subject, whom the principalities and powers obey, was subject to Mary." In what was He subject? In everything, even in the meanest. "The Word and Wisdom of God did not despise," but obeyed, "a woman and a carpenter."

III. With good reason does the same Saint exclaim: "Learn, O man, to obey; dust, learn to submit; be ashamed, proud ashes. God humbled Himself; and dare you exalt yourself? God submits Himself to man; and do you seek to rule, and to prefer yourself to your Creator? If, being man, you refuse to follow the example of your equal man, surely it will not be beneath you to follow the example of your Creator."

#### SATURDAY.

#### Christ's Obedience to His Parents.—II.

I. In order that you may be the more excited to imitate this admirable example of obedience that Christ has given you in regard to your superiors or directors under whom God has placed you, or may hereafter place you, meditate on the many advantages that are derived from this virtue. Nothing more acceptable can be offered to

God. God is appeased with victims and sacrifice, as the chief acts of religious worship; but He assures us Himself that obedience is still more acceptable to Him. "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams." (1 Kings xv. 22.) And with good reason, observes St. Gregory; for "in sacrifice the flesh of another is offered, but in obedience our own will is killed and the whole man offered in sacrifice."

II. There is no safer way to heaven than the road of obedience. Saints and holy Fathers teach us that there is nothing more dangerous in a spiritual life than to be our own guide and to follow our own judgment. Hence St. Bernard observes: "He that is his own master has a fool for his scholar;" for, as Solomon writes, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he who is wise hearkeneth unto counsels." (Prov. xii. 15.)

III. In the virtue of obedience all other virtues are included, and therefore by holy Fathers it is called the mother and guardian of them all. He who is obedient cannot fail to be humble, patient, meek, charitable, and master of himself; for, as the Wise Man says, "An obedient man shall speak of victory." (Prov. xxi. 28.) Form a growing esteem, then, for this virtue, and exercise it in imitation of Christ whenever occasions offer.

## **FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.**

### **Christ the Good Seed of Your Soul.**

"Behold, I sow my love in you, and it shall bring forth fruit in you."

I. "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field." (Matt. xiii. 24.) This

field is your soul, which is capable of receiving either good or bad seed. The seed which God sows in it consists of grace, holy inspirations, and pious affections, arising from the perusal of good books, from attention to sermons and to the advice of spiritual directors. The most precious seed, however, is His own body and blood in the sacrament; for "this is the corn of the chosen ones." (Zach. ix. 17.)

II. The soil of your soul is in itself fruitless and barren, and produces nothing but the weeds of vice and passion. Sometimes, like the field in the Gospel, it is covered with cockle, that is, with vices bearing the resemblance of virtue; and these fill the mind with vain hopes of future fruit: but when the harvest-time arrives, that is, at the last judgment, they will be cast into the fire. Purify your soul by mortification from these weeds of vice; separate the cockle from the good grain; distinguish real virtue from its resemblances, that the seed of the heavenly sower may not be choked in your soul.

III. How anxiously you ought to labor in the affairs of salvation, in order that you may yield fruit proportionate to the divine seed which God sows in your soul when you approach the holy sacraments! Beware lest you provoke this heavenly husbandman to indignation, and force Him to condemn you to the fire. "For the earth, which drinketh in the rain which cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbs and meat for those by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is rejected and very near to a curse, whose end is to be burnt." (Heb. vi. 7.)

## MONDAY.

**Christ Grows in Age and Wisdom.—I.**

I. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men." (Luke ii. 52.) Christ, from the first moment of His conception, possessed the plenitude of all wisdom, grace, and virtue, but in outward appearance He seemed to increase in them, thus accommodating His words and actions to His age. Hence you ought to infer that it is your duty to accommodate yourself to the times, places, and situations you are in, and particularly to make continual progress in virtue. For not to advance is to go back; there is nothing stationary in the way of virtue.

II. There are different manners of failing, or of making progress in virtue. Some, after they have begun well, fail in constancy, and resume their former course of life. These our Lord condemns when he says, "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 62.) He tells us to remember Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt, as a warning to others not to cast a lingering look back again on the sinful object which they have left.

III. Others in the progress of virtue grow remiss and tepid in the use of those means which are calculated to increase their fervor, and are therefore in danger of falling. To these Christ addresses Himself in the Apocalypse: "This I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first charity." (Apoc. ii. 4.) Others, again, begin and advance with a slow pace; and although there appears no great outward defect, there is generally a real internal decay. There are others, finally, who begin



well and advance cheerfully "and in their hearts have disposed to ascend" (Ps. lxxxiii. 6) from virtue to virtue. Examine in which of these classes you have ranked yourself, or in which you would wish to be placed. The last is the only one in which you can find security and safety.

## TUESDAY.

### Christ Grows in Age and Wisdom.—II.

I. "Jesus increased in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men." We must also do this, both before God and men, and avoid extremes. The only care of many is to appear wise and virtuous before men; they disregard real virtue, and care not for the sight of God nor the wounds of their consciences. Such was the conduct of the Pharisees, of whom Christ says, "they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward." (Matt. vi. 16.) Examine whether this be not the motive of some of your actions at least. Do you not even sometimes frequent the sacraments or hear mass from mere human respect, and to avoid the imputation of being indevout? Correct every fault on this subject, and act with purity of intention.

II. There are others who, on the contrary, pay no regard to the edification of their neighbors, but in all their actions are guided by the principles of an indiscreet fervor. Their conduct is pregnant with mischief; "they have a zeal of God," says the Apostle, "but not according to knowledge." (Rom. x. 2.) Hence He exhorts persons of this character to "provide things good, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." (Rom. xii. 17.)

III. The third class are actuated, as they should be, by both principles, and in this follow the example of their Lord and Master, who exhorts all, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) Examine each one of your actions in particular, and see what actions you perform merely to please men, and what again to please God alone, even to the disedification of others, and their spiritual disadvantage; and form a well-founded resolution of pleasing God by a pure intention, and of edifying others by good example.

#### WEDNESDAY.

##### **Necessity of Advancing in Virtue.—I.**

I. All the disciples of Jesus Christ ought to make continual progress in virtue. Not to advance in the way of virtue is to recede, as all the saints teach us. As a boat in the swift current of a river will infallibly be carried down the stream unless continually propelled by oars, so, unless you continually struggle against the impetuous current of a vitiated nature, you will certainly be carried along with it. St. Bernard justly observes, "not to gain ground is to lose it;" and hence you will ultimately fall again into the hands of your enemies, whom you wished to escape, if you do not continually advance.

II. The second motive for continually advancing in virtue is because such is the will of God, who wishes that we should be pure and holy in His divine sight. "Be ye therefore perfect," says Christ, "as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) No one can be perfect or eminent in any thing on a sudden, but by

degrees he must attain it. Hence at once the necessity of continual progress.

III. The third reason is because such ought to be the conduct of a true disciple of Christ. "The scholar that makes progress," says the eloquent St. Bernard, "is a glory to his master. Whoever, therefore, fails to make progress in the school of Christ is unworthy to have Him for his master." How shameful would it be, to have studied philosophy and theology seven years, and to have made no progress, but to end as we began! How much more ought you to blush if you have become more remiss in prayer, more given to distractions, a greater lover of yourself, your own ease and pleasure, than when you first entered the school of virtue! Endeavor, therefore, continually to advance in the glorious and honorable career of perfection.

#### THURSDAY.

#### Necessity of Advancing in Virtue.—II.

I. Many evils result from a neglect of improving in virtue. This neglect provokes the anger of God; and therefore He says to the bishop of Ephesus, in the Apocalypse, "Be mindful from whence thou art fallen, and do penance, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place." (Apoc. ii. 5.) God may have designed you also to give light to many; take care, then, that He do not move you from your place in consequence of your tepidity and indevotion.

II. This neglect deprives us of many great spiritual advantages and rewards. "The slothful hand hath wrought poverty," says the Wise Man. (Prov. x. 4.) Oh, what glory should we purchase in heaven, were we al-

ways intent on our spiritual profit, and careful to seize every occasion of exercising virtue ! Observe what care worldly men take to amass wealth and increase their fortunes, which, however, they are soon to leave; and blush at your own neglect in amassing everlasting treasures which God freely offers you.

III. This neglect exposes man to final ruin; for it was said of the servant who neglected to employ his talent in the service and to the advantage of his master, "Take ye away, therefore, the talent from him, and the unprofitable servant cast ye out into exterior darkness." (Matt. xxv. 28.) Excite yourself, therefore, to persevere in the way of virtue with cheerfulness. Examine upon what occasions you are accustomed to lose courage, and resolve to go forward with renovated spirit. Christ is your commander, and your reward "exceeding great."

#### FRIDAY.

### **Life of Christ from His Twelfth to His Thirtieth Year.—I.**

I. There is nothing said in the Gospel regarding the life of Christ from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, but simply that He was obedient to His parents, and increased in wisdom and age and grace before God and men. This silence is most instructive to us; it teaches us the necessity of the virtue of obedience and continual advancement in virtue. Esteem these virtues, then, and make them the constant study of your life.

II. It seems certain that Christ spent a great part of this time in high contemplation and conversation with His heavenly Father; for He who could afterward say to Martha that her sister Mary had chosen the better part, because she loved the exercise of contemplation, must

have practised it Himself most perfectly. If David "praised the Lord seven times a day," and at midnight rose "to confess to Him" (Ps. cviii. 164), with how much more reason may we suppose that Christ did? Learn, therefore, to become a man of prayer, and an interior man, both for your own sake and your neighbor's good, and be convinced that the frequent exercise of prayer is the first and the most important duty of a Christian.

III. During the whole of this time our Lord concealed His superior knowledge from the world; He was considered as unlettered by all, and hence afterwards, "the Jews wondered, saying, How doth this man know letters, having never learned?" (John viii. 15.) They even said, "He is become mad" (Mark iii. 21), because he spoke in so wonderful a manner, and performed such surprising actions. Love, then, to be unknown and inconsiderable. "Believe me, He has lived well who has concealed himself." Be not too forward in displaying your knowledge, although you may know more than others do. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him who glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me" (Jer. ix. 23), says the Lord.

#### • SATURDAY.

### **Life of Christ from His Twelfth to His Thirtieth Year.—II.**

I. As to His exterior occupation, it is probable that Christ was employed in the occupation of His reputed father, according to the inquiry of the Jews, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mark vi. 3.) Represent to yourself the eternal Son of God engaged in the

lowly employment, and meditate in silent admiration on this divine scene of humility. Is this a fit employment for the Lord of glory? Truly, "His work is strange to Him"! (Is. xxviii. 21.) Consider why and for whom all this is done.

II. Christ employed Himself thus out of pure humility; for He who had assumed all the miseries of human nature, and had submitted to the general sentence of death pronounced on all mankind, submitted also to the necessity of labor—"In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." (Gen. iii. 19.) Christ had this object also in view, viz., to teach us to avoid idleness, as the source and origin of every mischief. Imitate Him, then, and remember that "idleness hath taught much evil." (Ecclus. xxxiii. 29.)

III. What singular advantages the Blessed Virgin derived from this long and familiar conversation with her God! Imagine what divine entertainment it was for her to discourse with her Son on God and heaven. Figure to yourself the amazement of the Holy Virgin when she beholds Him employed in all the menial services of domestic life. She might well exclaim, "Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God!" (Rom. xi. 33.) Reflect on each particular, and draw principles for your own conduct.\*

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\* If there be six weeks between Epiphany and Sexagesima Sunday, make now the Meditations for the twenty-fourth week after Pentecost (page 485).

## Observations concerning the Meditations on the Passion of Christ.

The Church in her Liturgy omits the usual Alleluias and expressions of joy from Septuagesima Sunday until she commemorates the resurrection of Christ. This she does to express her concern and grief for her suffering Spouse. The Sunday is called Septuagesima because it commences the seventh week before Passion-Sunday. Hence it seems proper that we should begin to meditate on the passion of our Lord. During the meditations on this subject, many affections may be entertained and expressed; but spiritual writers remark seven affections which peculiarly correspond to the subject. It has been thought proper briefly to mention them in this place, rather than in the body of the Meditations.

I. *Admire* in each mystery the dignity of the Person who suffers, and the intensity of the torments to which He freely subjects himself. "Who is this who cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra? Why, then, is thy apparel red, and thy garment like theirs who tread in the wine-press?" (Is. lxiii. 1, 2.)

II. *Condole* with him, as children do with their parents when in distress or affliction, or as brothers do with each other. "My son Absalom, Absalom, my son, would to God that I might die for thee, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" (2 Kings xviii. 33.)

III. *Be confounded* at your ingratitude, and grieve for your sins which were the causes of his sufferings. If these sins drew blood from Christ, they should surely draw tears from you. "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me." (Ps. l. 5.)

IV. *Love* Him who has shown such love for you,

and suffered so much for your sake. "Lord," says St. Ambrose, "I owe more to Your injuries for my redemption than to Your works for my creation."

V. *Hope* for, and promise yourself, all the good that your heart can wish; for "He who spared not even His own Son, has He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

VI. *Thank* Him for having suffered so much for you; "for the best means of preserving a benefit is a faithful recollection of it, and a constant profession of gratitude."

VII. *Imitate* your Lord and Leader in suffering reproaches and injuries. He has suffered so much for you; and what return have you made, what return will you make? "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps." (1 Pet. ii. 21.)



## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

**Christ the Master of the Vineyard of your Soul.**

‘ Let my beloved come into his garden and eat the fruit.’ (Cant. v. 1.)

I. Your soul, and the soul of every rational creature, is a particular vineyard, belonging to the “great Master of the family,” who is the subject of the Gospel of this day. Feel convinced that, to-day, He will come to examine His vineyard in you, and to gather fruit from it. Hear Him say, with the Spouse, in the Canticle: “Let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vineyards flourish: if the flowers be ready to bring forth fruits.” (Cant. vii. 12.)

II. This divine Master of the family has omitted nothing on His part which might conduce to render you a fertile vineyard. “I planted thee,” He says by His prophet, “a chosen vineyard, all true seed.” (Jer. ii. 21.) He has sown in your soul much seed of true and real piety; He has guarded this seed by the inclosure of salutary laws; He has given you His sacraments, as channels to convey to your soul the fertilizing moisture of His grace. He has omitted nothing which could be beneficial to you. “What is there,” He says, “that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?” Take care, then, that you yield Him proper fruit; beware lest the following part of the passage be applicable to you: “I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes.” (Is. v. 4.) If this be the case, you have reason to fear the threat which hangs over you: “And now I will show you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; it shall not be pruned, and it shall not

be digged; but briers and thorns shall come up; and I will command the clouds to let fall no rain upon it." Meditate on the misfortunes that all these evils would entail upon you, and resolve to avert them.

III. Nothing ought to be wanting to convince you that it is your duty to prepare for His visit. Prune away all superfluities by salutary mortification. Discover the nature of the soil of your soul by a thorough self-knowledge. Destroy the briers and growing weeds of passion, and let the tears of compunction fertilize the aridity of your soul. In fine, "let your vineyard be before you, and it will bring forth its fruits in due season." (Cant. viii. 12; Ps. i. 3.)

#### MONDAY.

##### **Christ invites all to Contemplate His Passion.**

I. Christ with good reason complains, that after having suffered so much for men, He still finds them ungrateful and forgetful. "I looked for one," He might truly have said during His passion, "who would grieve together with Me, but there was none; and for one who would comfort Me, and I found none." (Ps. lxxviii. 21.) "The just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart." (Is. lvii. 1.) Meditate on this pitiful state of your Jesus; tell Him that you will not leave Him alone; that you will sympathize with Him; and that the just one shall not perish without your notice and condolence.

II. We can do nothing more pleasing to our Redeemer than to meditate frequently on His passion. He invites all mankind to this holy exercise by the mouth of His prophet: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." (Lament. i. 12.) He calls the attention of all mankind to His suffer-

ings by the same prophet: "Remember my poverty," he says, "the wormwood and the gall." (Lament. iii. 19.) Reflect, and apply the case to yourself: if you had suffered any serious loss in your property or person in the defence of your friend, would you not justly expect that he should ever be grateful for your friendly kindness? How much more has Christ suffered for you!

III. Present yourself before Christ as an attentive spectator of His sufferings, and promise to meditate on them with feelings of gratitude. Say with the prophet, "I will be mindful and remember; and my soul shall languish within me. These things I shall think on in my heart, therefore will I hope." (Lament. iii. 20.) And if you contemplate His passion, you will have good reason to hope; for He suffered in order that He might be able to present Himself as our advocate before His Father, and allege His own sufferings in our behalf. He pardoned the thief on the cross, and gave him admission into paradise.

## TUESDAY.

### Christ's Passion in General.

#### WHO SUFFERS?

I. He who suffers is the immaculate Lamb of God, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Pet. ii. 22.) He was the Holy of holies, possessed of the divine Spirit beyond measure, the perfect form and image of His Father. His crucifiers confessed Him to be the Son of God, and their judge had already pronounced Him innocent.

II. He who suffered had already devoted His whole life to the good of others; He "had gone about doing

good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." (Acts x. 38.) He therefore not only suffered without deserving these sufferings, but, on the contrary, He merited every kind of honor, respect, and veneration.

III. He who suffered was the great Lover of mankind. He had made Himself our Redeemer, Pastor, Physician, and Brother. If the son ought to feel sensibly the sufferings of his father, and the spouse to condole with her spouse in his afflictions, how much more reason have you to compassionate Jesus Christ in the sufferings which He has undergone for your sake! There is no character, however affectionate, and no title, however dear, that this man-God has not assumed in your regard. Grieve for Him, then; and if you cannot carry, with the Apostle, the marks of His sufferings on your own body, bear them in your heart. Resolve to suffer something, at least, for His sake.

### **WEDNESDAY.**

## **Christ's Passion in General.**

### **WHAT DOES HE SUFFER?**

I. The sufferings of Christ were various and numerous. He suffers in His external goods; for He is stripped of everything that He had, even of His very clothes, and He is suspended naked on the cross, in the presence of all the Jews. He suffers in His honor; for every species of reproach is thrown upon Him. His fame suffers; for He is variously traduced and calumniated: He is represented as a Samaritan, a man possessed by the devil, a glutton, a lover of wine, a blasphemer, and a seducer. His knowledge is insulted; for He is considered as a man without learning, and a madman. His miracles are

esteemed as so many impostures. And to crown all, He is totally abandoned by His friends.

II. How much He suffered in His body! His eyes were defiled with spittle, and filled with the blood which flowed from His sacred head, and tormented with the scornful gestures which they were obliged to behold. His ears were wounded with repeated blasphemies against God, and most unjust accusations brought against Himself. His taste was tormented with the most violent thirst, and then with vinegar and gall. Lastly, His sense of feeling was tortured, in every part of His sacred body, by thorns, stripes, and nails. So that it might be said of Him with truth, "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein." (Is. i. 6.)

III. Christ suffered, also, most severely in His mind. His agony in the garden and His dereliction on the cross were perhaps the severest of all His pains: add to those His foreknowledge of the ingratitude of mankind, and their abuse of His redemption. Be ashamed at your cowardice in suffering and your impatience under the pressure of crosses. Form a resolution of suffering something for Him who has suffered so much for you.

#### THURSDAY.

### Christ's Passion in General.

#### FROM WHOM DOES HE SUFFER?

I. He suffers from every kind and character of men; from the highest to the lowest, from the sacred and the profane. He is dragged about the streets by the dregs of the people; He is forsaken by His friends, He is accused by the priests, laughed at by the soldiery, con-

demned by the council of the high priest, ignominiously treated in the court of the governor, and sentenced to death at the tribunal of the president. Learn, hence, to condemn the opinions and judgments of the world which was so unjust to your Saviour.

II. He suffered from those whom He came to save, on whom He had already bestowed most singular favors during His private and public life; so that He might truly say, "they have hated me without cause." (John xv. 25.) And what is still more, He suffered Himself to be betrayed by His own disciple, to give us an example of patience in the failure and abandonment of friends. "The man of My peace, in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, hath greatly supplanted Me." (Ps. xl. 10.)

III. He was left exposed to the machinations of hell, according to the expression of St. Luke: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke xxii. 53.) He was surrendered to the power of Satan, not as holy Job was, with this restriction, "but yet save his life" (Job ii. 6), but absolutely and even to death. Compassionate your Lord, thus forsaken by His friends and left to the mercy of His most cruel enemies; and if at any time it should be your fortune to experience the insolence of men, remember "the disciple is not above his Master." (Matt. x. 24.)

## FRIDAY.

### Christ's Passion in General.

#### FOR WHOM DOES HE SUFFER?

I. Christ did not suffer for Himself, for He was incapable of doing anything that deserved punishment; but He suffered in order to reconcile mankind to His eternal

Father, and to open to them the gates of heaven. He suffered in every manner, because in every manner men had offended their God, and because His object was to apply a remedy to every vice. To correct our covetousness, He chose to die naked; to reform our pride, He willingly suffered reproaches; he opposed his torments to our luxury, and He drank vinegar and gall to atone for our intemperance.

II. He suffered in a most peculiar manner for His enemies, that is, for all sinners; for "God commendeth His charity towards us, because, when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us and when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God; by the death of His Son." (Rom. v. 8, 10.) And what is more, when He was in the act of expiring on the cross, He prayed for His executioners, that He might teach us "to overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii. 21.)

III. Christ suffered for all mankind in general, and for each of us in particular. Apply, then, His sufferings to yourself, and make them your own. Render yourself capable of saying with St. Paul, "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Reflect what return you can make for so much love: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation." (Ps. cxv. 3.) Take, therefore, the chalice of His passion, and drink it up, at least spiritually by contemplation: this is the return which your Saviour expects, and of which He will most cordially accept.

**SATURDAY.****Christ's Passion in General.**

WITH WHAT AFFECTION DOES HE SUFFER?

I. His sufferings were prompted by a most sincere love for us; He earnestly wished beforehand for the hour in which His passion would commence. "I have a baptism," He says, "wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.)

II. His sufferings were endured with the most profuse liberality. One single pain, one drop of blood, would have atoned for the crimes of a thousand worlds, in consequence of the nature of the sufferer; but Christ shed all His blood. "With Him" there is "plentiful redemption." (Ps. cxxix. 7.)

III. He suffered with the greatest meekness; for, "when He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not; but He delivered Himself to him who judged Him unjustly." (1 Pet. ii. 23.) And the prophet had foretold that "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter." (Is. liii. 7.)

IV. He suffered with an insatiable zeal for the salvation of mankind; hence He exclaimed on the cross, "I thirst." (John xix. 28.)

V. In His sufferings He was perfectly humble; hence He might have said of Himself, "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.)

VI. He exercised the virtue of poverty during the whole of His passion, and He ultimately died naked on the cross.

VII. His patience and perseverance were uncon-



querable, and never yielded to the most grievous tortures.

VIII. He practised the virtue of obedience in its highest degree during His sufferings. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) He was obedient not only to His eternal Father, but even to His cruel executioners. "I have given my body to the strikers," He says of Himself by His prophet, "and my cheeks to those who plucked them; I have not turned away my face from those who rebuked me and spat upon me." (Is. 1. 6.) Examine minutely this perfect model of patience and virtue, and "go and do thou likewise."

#### SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

#### Christ the Seed of Eternal Life.

"I will sow her unto Me in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who was without mercy." (Osee ii. 23.)

I. "A sower went forth to sow his seed." (Luke viii. 5.) Christ our Lord is both the sower and the seed itself. He intrusts the soil of our souls with His own precious body and blood. He wishes this divine grain to yield a harvest, not of temporal and corruptible, but of eternal and incorruptible, increase. For "he who soweth in the spirit shall reap life everlasting." (Gal. iii. 8.) Earnestly wish for this blessed harvest in your soul.

II. Although this divine seed be in itself most fruitful, it requires, nevertheless, the concurrence of a good soil to produce a harvest. Hence, if it fall on the highway, it will be immediately trampled down; if among thorns, it will be choked up. Examine, then, whether your soul be a proper soil for this seed; whether it be trampled

upon continually by distractions and idle thoughts; and whether it be stony and full of the cares and occupations of this life, and consequently not susceptible of the divine influence of heavenly grace. If this be unfortunately your case, reform your state, and render yourself capable of profiting by this divine seed.

III. This seed, although sown in a good soil, does not "bring forth fruit" except "in patience." (Luke viii. 15.) Learn, therefore, to persevere with patience in expectation of the effect. Do not desist from cultivating the soil of your soul because, perhaps, you do not immediately discover the fruit which you desire to reap. "Behold," says St. James, "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently bearing till he receive the early and the latter rain." (James v. 7.) Act in the same manner, and the divine seed will not be sown in your soul in vain.

#### MONDAY.

### **Christ Foretells His Passion.**

I. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." (Matt. xx. 18.) The time had now arrived in which Christ had decreed from all eternity to suffer for the redemption of the world. He therefore went up to Jerusalem with great cheerfulness and speed; for "He went before them, and they were astonished, and following were afraid." (Mark x. 32.) Thus did He hasten to death, carried along by the force of His love for us. You, on the contrary, are tardy in suffering anything for Christ. He also went before in order to teach you to show by example what you would wish to teach by words.

II. He revealed His approaching passion to His disciples: "And the Son of man shall be betrayed to the

chief priests and to the scribes." He had communicated to them this knowledge before, but not so explicitly. He made frequent mention of His passion, though so terrible in itself, because He always bore it in His mind; and even amidst all the glories of His transfiguration He treated "of His decease, which He should accomplish in Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 31.) Endeavor, on your part, to entertain a pious and feeling recollection of this passion; it will console your suffering Saviour, and induce Him to bestow on you all the treasures of His redemption.

III. "And they understood none of these things." (Luke xviii. 34.) The Apostles were as yet worldly men, and bent upon honors and preferments. There was a "strife among them, which of them should seem to be greater." (Luke xxii. 24.) They consequently understood nothing of the mystery of the Cross, or of the advantages resulting from humility and patience under reproach. Divest yourself of all undue worldly affections if you desire to comprehend the divine secrets of the Cross. Ponder the severe rebuke which Christ gave to St. Peter when He dissuaded him from suffering the ignominy of His passion: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a scandal unto me, because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." (Matt. xvi. 23.) Give the same answer to self-love when it attempts to dissuade you from imitating Christ.

## TUESDAY.

### Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem.—I.

I. When our Lord approached Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples to bring Him an ass, on which He intended to ride into the city. On other occasions He was

accustomed to walk to the places in which He intended to preach; but on this, He enters Jerusalem in this unusual manner, to teach mankind that poverty, humility, and meekness are the proper badges of His divine royalty. In this action Christ literally fulfilled the prophecy of Zacharias: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, the King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour. He is poor, and riding upon an ass. (Zach. ix. 9.)

II. Christ adopted this manner of entering the city to show us with what alacrity He went to suffer, as if He had been going to take possession of a kingdom: as indeed He was, according to the expression of the hymn, "He reigns on the tree." He wished, also, to give us an example of triumphing in the midst of reproaches and contempt. His love for us prompted Him to render His passion as severe as possible, by increasing the glory which preceded it. "Being exalted," as the prophet said, "I am humbled." (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.)

III. "Hosanna to the son of David." (Matt. xxi. 15.) This expression of joy and respect proceeded from the poor and lower order of society and not from the rich, from whom the mysteries of poverty and humility are often concealed. But mark the fickleness of the human heart: in a few days their cry was changed into "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (Luke xxiii. 21.) The favor and applause of the world are ever of this nature. How foolish, then, is it to pursue this inconstant shadow as the end of our existence! Every Christian should be able to say with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)

## WEDNESDAY.

## Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem.—II.

I. In the midst of His triumph, as He approached the city, Christ shed tears over it. By this act He convinces us that He was not, and therefore that we ought not to be, transported with the honors which we may receive. "If riches" or honors "abound, set not your heart upon them." (Ps. lxi. 11.) His charity prompted His tears to flow for the blind stubbornness of the Jews, which He foreknew would prove their ruin. He gave us an example, too, of weeping in this vale of tears. We read of Him that He wept several times; but the Scripture nowhere says that He laughed. "Blessed are those who mourn." (Matt. v. 5.)

II. Consider the words of Christ addressed to the city: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace" (Luke xix. 42), then thou also wouldst weep: "For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench round about thee." Consider these words as addressed to yourself. If you knew the things that are for your peace, if you foresaw what temptations would assail you, what crimes you would commit, and into what misery and misfortunes you would afterwards fall, you also would shed tears, and spend the present time more profitably. Begin to do so, therefore, and fortify yourself in such a manner that you may not afterwards be overcome by your spiritual enemies.

III. Christ assigns *this* to be the cause of the city's ruin: "Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." (Luke xix. 44.) Of how great importance is it that you should know when Christ visits you by

His holy inspirations, good books, sermons, and instructions! Endeavor, therefore, to know the time of your visitation. "To-day, if you should hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xciv. 8), but follow the divine call. Deplore the general depravity of mankind, and especially your own.

#### THURSDAY.

### **Christ is Sold by Judas.**

I. Christ might have been delivered into the hands of the Jews by various ways, but for His greater ignominy He would be sold, and that, too, by His own disciple, to teach you to bear with false brethren, and to convince you that there is no state nor place so holy as to exclude the danger of falling. Christ foreknew that it would be deemed a foul disgrace to His Apostolic school; he nevertheless chose Judas for an Apostle for our instruction. "In that point," observes St. Ambrose, "He chose rather to have His judgment called in question by us than His affection for us."

II. To what excess of crime does the spirit of avarice lead its votaries! "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" (Matt. xxvi. 14.) Ponder who it is that is to be sold. The great God of all things. For how much? For thirty pieces of silver, for which a laboring beast could hardly have been procured. So vilely is the Sovereign of the world undervalued! By whom is He sold? By His own disciple. To whom? To His mortal and sworn enemies. Compassionate your insulted Lord, and never disdain the idea of being treated below your deserts or quality.

III. How often have you sold the same Lord for some smaller trifle, some transitory pleasure, some sinful

thought or detracting word! Reflect how many do the same repeatedly, and in the extremes of folly and madness renounce their God like Judas. "A fool worketh mischief, as it were for sport" (Prov. x. 23), says Solomon. Take care not to be of this class, and endeavor to appease God's indignation against those who are in this number.

#### FRIDAY.

#### **The Paschal Lamb.**

I. Christ ate the paschal lamb with His disciples the day before He suffered, in order to teach His followers obedience to the laws of God in every circumstance of life. He therefore sent Peter and John to procure for that purpose "a large dining-room furnished." (Mark xiv. 15.) Such ought to be your soul, dilated with pure charity, and furnished with all the ornaments of virtue, as often as you receive in holy communion the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Ponder the words the Master addressed to His disciples: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." (Luke xxii. 15.) Admire the excess of His love towards us: He longed for the moment in which He was to leave us His precious body and blood, and to suffer and die for us. Oh that you were as desirous of suffering for Him!

II. Christ observed all the ceremonies prescribed by the law, in eating the paschal lamb. In each of these ceremonies He reflected upon Himself and His passion, of which these were the prefigurative representations. "Christ our pasch," says the Church, "is immolated, for He is the true Lamb who takes away the sins of the world." Imagine you see Christ with His disciples stand-

ing at the table, "their reins girt, with shoes on their feet, holding staves in their hands, eating in haste." (Exod. xii. 11.) All this was expressive of the vigor of mind and promptitude with which He suffered.

III. When Christ beheld the paschal lamb on the table, in the state prescribed by the law, He could not help reflecting how He was soon to be extended on the cross, after having been scourged and variously tormented by the malicious Jews. When the lamb was cut in pieces, without breaking any of its bones, he saw pictured before Him His own mangled body, and the dis-jointing of His bones, though none of them were to be broken. The haste with which the Jews were commanded to eat the paschal lamb prefigured the hasty fury of His persecutors. The bitter wild lettuce represented the gall to His mind, and the bitter chalice of His passion, which He had to drink to the very dregs. Great must have been His love for mankind, when, with all these presentiments and feelings, He could still persevere in hastening to commence His passion !

#### SATURDAY.

### **Christ Washes His Disciples' Feet.**

I. After Christ had eaten the paschal lamb with His disciples, He began to prepare for the greatest act of kindness that He could perform for mankind. He intended to leave them a perfect memorial of Himself, by leaving them His body and blood for the food and nourishment of their souls. Before He did this, however, He gave them an example of the most perfect humility, by washing the feet of His disciples. By this act He also intended to show mankind with what purity they ought to approach the sacred table. Ponder the simple words



of the Scripture, for they are full of unction: "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And when supper was done, knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God, He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and having taken a towel, He girded Himself." (John xiii. 1.)

II. "After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." (John xiii. 5.) Behold the Lord of heaven and earth washing the feet of poor fishermen! Well might St. Peter cry out, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Thou shalt never wash my feet." Ponder Christ's severe disapprobation of this disobedient expression: "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." Learn, hence, that all virtue is false that is in opposition to obedience.

III. Christ washed the feet of Judas also, and no doubt with tender expressions of kindness, in order to soften his hard heart; but in vain. Learn to love your enemies, and endeavor to reconcile them to yourself by kind offices. Guard, also, against the misfortune of obduracy of heart. "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth: but ignominy and reproach follow him." (Prov. xviii. 3.) Ponder the words of Christ after He had washed His disciples' feet: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so ye do also."

## QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

**Christ the Light of Your Soul.**

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; for the Lord shall arise upon thee." (Is. lx. 1.)

I. Imagine yourself to be that blind man who, as is recorded in the Gospel of to-day, sat by the road begging. (Luke xviii. 35.) You are spiritually blind in many things, since you are not able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, real and apparent good. You are also unable to discover your own defects in such a manner that you may justly say with royal David, "My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see." (Ps. xxxix. 13.)

II. What a cheerless and disconsolate life it is to be in continual darkness, without corporeal light! How much more so is it to dwell in spiritual darkness and mental blindness! "What manner of joy shall be to me," says the blind Tobias, "who sit in darkness and see not the light of heaven?" (Tobias v. 12.) Reflect upon yourself, and examine if you see the clear light of heaven, or whether you are not satisfied to see the dim, and false, and fading light of the earth and earthly things. Consider how dangerous it is to be in darkness; for he that "walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John xii. 35), and is exposed to a thousand unknown dangers and falls. Learn, hence, sufficiently to esteem the benefit of divine light.

III. Christ our Lord is "the sun of justice" (Mal. iv. 2), and "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (John i. 9.) Entreat Him, then, when He visits your soul to-day, to produce in it

the usual effects of light; to open your eyes to your own defects; to enable you to discover real from fictitious good. Take care you do not close your eyes against this light, by putting impediments to the grace of the sacrament. Holy Job says of sinners: "They have been rebellious to the light; they have not known his ways." (Job xxiv. 13.) See that you be not rebellious, but dilate your heart to receive the influence of this holy light; say with the Prophet, "Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord; O my God, enlighten my darkness." (Ps. xvii. 29.)

#### MONDAY.

#### **Institution of the Holy Eucharist.—I.**

I. After Christ had washed the disciples' feet, He returned to the table, and, intending to leave mankind a singular memorial of His love for them, "took bread" into His holy hands, to show them that His memorial was the gift of His liberality. "Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with Thy blessing every living creature." (Ps. cxliv. 16.) Then lifting up His eyes to heaven, to show us whence His bread came, He gave thanks to His eternal Father for so great a blessing bestowed upon His followers by His means. He then blessed it, and changed it into His own body. Do you also give thanks to the eternal Father for being made a partaker of this same divine bread; and entreat Him that by the means of this spiritual food He would transform you into another man.

II. The Apostles were certainly astonished when they learned that Christ intended to feed them on His own body and blood. Their minds were, however, illuminated with light from above, and they believed everything possible to God. Learn, you, also to captivate your understanding to the obedience of faith. Observe with

what humility, reverence, and devotion each one communicates. Do you imitate them when you approach the same table, and avoid following the example of Judas, who "ate and drank unworthily, eating and drinking judgment to himself, and not discerning the body of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 29.)

III. "Do this for a commemoration of Me." (Luke xxii. 19.) Ponder the infinite liberality and charity of Christ, who, intending that this divine benefit should be continued through all ages, by these words gave power to the Apostles and their successors to consecrate His precious body and blood. This power was never granted even to angels. Reflect what a dignity it is; respect those whom Christ has honored so highly, and listen with obedience to those to whose voice Christ Himself is so obedient at the altar. Be ever grateful for this divine mystery, and always prepare yourself well to receive it.

## TUESDAY.

### **Institution of the Holy Eucharist.—II.**

I. Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist immediately before His passion, to show His excess of love towards mankind by preparing for them a heavenly banquet, even at the very time when they were plotting His death. By this institution He also manifested the desire which He had of always remaining with us, even corporally. The time was at hand when He was to leave this world: but He would not leave it without leaving us Himself in a peculiar manner. He wished, also, by this institution to leave us a memorial of His passion and death, as well as a living sacrifice (for the virtue of the ancient sacrifices ceased at His death), by which the fruit

of His passion might be applied to us. In fine, He instituted this sacrament as His last will and testament, by which He bequeathed Himself to us.

II. He instituted the sacrament under the accidents of bread and wine, in order that He might be more perfectly united to us by becoming our meat and drink, and by incorporating Himself with us. Another motive was to teach us that this divine food operates in the soul those effects which ordinary food produces in the body; that is, it nourishes, preserves, and increases our spiritual strength, and in some respect transforms us into Himself. "He who eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." (John vi. 58.) As bread is a mass composed of many grains, and wine a liquid produced from many grapes, so, by the participation of this divine sacrament, the hearts of the faithful are made one spirit. Hence the reception of this sacrament is properly called communion, or a union of many among themselves and with Christ.

III. Although under each of the sacramental forms the entire body and blood of Christ are contained, without any real separation of one from the other, yet Christ instituted the sacrament under both forms in order that He might the better represent His passion and death, during which His blood was entirely drained from His sacred body. Recollect His bloody sweat, His scourging at the pillar, His being crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, and pierced with the spear. Think what return you can make for so much love; say with David, "I will take the chalice of salvation," by grateful recollections and compassion, "and I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv. 4.)

## ASH-WEDNESDAY.

**Christ's Sermon after Supper.—I.**

I. After Christ had distributed His body and blood to His Apostles, He addressed to them that long sermon which is recorded in the Gospel of St. John. After communion, Christ is accustomed to treat more at large with the pious soul and He would do so with you, were you not accustomed to leave Him immediately, or to shut your ears to His holy inspirations. In this sermon He performed the character (1) of a comforter, by alleviating the grief of His Apostles for His future absence, showing them how expedient it was for them that He should leave the world. (2) He acted the part of a master, by teaching them what He wished them to observe. (3) He acted as an intercessor with His heavenly Father in our behalf, praying Him to preserve us. "Examine how you observe what He enjoins," and be thankful for the lessons which you have received from Him.

II. As our master, Christ chiefly insists on our love of His Father and Himself above all things. "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Remain in My love." (John xv. 9.) Examine whether you love Him as He has loved you and yet there can be no comparison between the effects of these affections. His love for you is infinitely beneficial to you; yours for Him is in no respect profitable to Him. Notwithstanding this, out of pure affection for you, and to gain your love, He has given you His own precious body and blood, and even His life on the cross, for your redemption. "Greater love than this no man hath." (John xv. 13.)

III. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments; if any one love Me, he will keep My word." (John xiv. 15.) "The performance of actions," says St. Gregory, "is the

proof of love." How necessary is it for you, if you really love your Saviour, to act and suffer for Him! Compassionate Him, at least, in His sufferings: offer up the fast of Lent, and whatever painful circumstances may attend it, for your past sins, and in union with His pains and torments.

#### THURSDAY.

### **Christ's Sermon after Supper.—II.**

I. After having enjoined the love of God above all things, our divine Master insists on the love of our neighbor. "This is my commandment," He emphatically says, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John xv. 12.) He calls this "a new commandment," and styles it "His" own, because it is peculiar to Christianity. This precept was new, as to the manner of observing it, because He requires that our love should be like His, extending to friend and foe, without respect to merit or recompense, and even with our own temporal inconvenience. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples," He says, "if ye have love one for another." (John xiii. 35.) Take care that you be one of His disciples, and respect what He has inculcated in such weighty terms.

II. Our divine Teacher commands us also to practise prayer. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John xvi. 24.) So friendly an invitation cannot fail to ground a great confidence. The poor and needy are invited, and even pressed to receive benefits; and the invitation comes from a Being who is both able and willing to realize His promise. We have only to pray in a proper manner, that is, in Christ's name, for such things as regard our salvation, and with perseverance.

III. Christ foretells that it will be the lot of all those who follow Him to suffer persecution: "They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God." (John xvi. 2.) He encouraged His disciples to bear all these patiently, from three considerations. 1. "The servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (John xv. 20.) 2. By pronouncing it a sign of predestination. "Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." 3. By proposing the reward: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi. 20.) Offer yourself to suffer what your Saviour may please to send you.

#### FRIDAY.

#### On Christ's Prayer in the Garden.

I. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to mount Olivet" (Matt. xxvi. 30), "over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden" (John xviii. 1), in order that where human nature fell it might begin to be restored. As He went along, "He began to fear and to be heavy" (Mark xiv. 3), saying to His three disciples, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (Matt. xxvi. 34.) The grief which He felt was equal to the pains of dying, and would have taken away His life had He not reserved it for other torments. Christ might, if He had chosen, been free from all these pains, and have gone to suffer with pleasure; because the beatific vision which He always enjoyed was capable of drowning all pain whatsoever. But He deprived Himself of its influence, in order that He might be like us in all things, and give us an example which we might imitate in *our* sufferings.

II. "When He was come to the place, He said to them, Pray, lest ye enter into temptation; and He was with-



drawn away from them a stone's cast, and kneeling down, He prayed, Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me! but yet not My will, but Thine be done." (Luke xxii. 40.) Ponder His profound reverence to His eternal Father, and His confidential love expressed in the word *Father*. Contemplate His perfect resignation, in the words, "not My will, but Thine be done," and His perseverance in prayer for a whole hour. "Could ye not watch one hour with Me?" (Matt. xxvi. 40.) Learn hence how to pray, and resign yourself to the divine will.

III. Christ, like a good shepherd anxious for His flock, even in the midst of His own distress and the ardor of His prayer, visits His three Apostles. He found them asleep the first, second, and third times. Immediately after communion, they were so full of fervor as to offer themselves to die for their Master; but they cannot now even hold up their heads in prayer. Examine if this be not the character of yourself. The Apostles formerly watched all night for their own interest, when they were fishermen; but now, when the interest of their souls is concerned, and when they are commanded to watch, they cannot refrain from sleep. Beware of sloth, tediousness, and forgetfulness in spiritual things; for, as St. Augustine observes, "the sleep of the soul is to forget God."

#### SATURDAY.

#### Christ's Bloody Sweat.

I. After Christ had found His disciples asleep, and had left them in order to continue His prayer, "there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him." (Luke xxii. 43.) Good God! is it possible that the eternal Son of God should borrow comfort from His creatures? Observe how the Father of lights at last sends comfort to

those who persevere in prayer. Imagine what reasons the angel might use in comforting your agonizing Saviour. He probably represented to Him the necessity of His passion for the redemption of mankind, and the glory that would redound to His Father and Himself. All this Christ understood infinitely better than the angel, yet He did not refuse the proffer of consolation, in order to teach you to respect the advice and consolation of your inferiors.

II. "His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." Imagine you see it gush from every pore of His sacred body, and beg of Him to bathe your soul in it. Detest your tepidity and coldness in prayer, and your barrenness in devotion. Ponder the causes of so preternatural an effect. 1. The clear apprehension of all His future torments, as if they were present. 2. His perfect foreknowledge of the sins that would be committed, and of the general ingratitude of mankind, for whom He was on the point of suffering so much and so ineffectually. Condole with your Saviour, and grieve that you yourself have been so great a cause of His pain and sufferings.

III. "And being in an agony, He prayed the longer." From this you ought to learn, that in proportion as afflictions increase, so ought you to redouble your exertions in prayer. Christ might have prevented His agony or this conflict between the spirit and flesh if He had pleased; but He underwent it in order to show us how we ought to resist and conquer our passions. Reflect how easily you suffer yourself to be overcome by your evil propensities, and transgress your good resolutions. When temptation presses, you ought "to expect the Lord, to do manfully, and to let your heart take courage, and wait for the Lord." (Ps. xxvi. 14.)

**FIRST WEEK OF LENT.****SUNDAY.****Christ your Captain.**

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God! and defend me from those who rise up against me." (Ps. lviii. 2.)

I. Consider the words of holy Job, "the life of man upon earth is a warfare." (Job vii. 1.) We have continually to fight against three most stubborn enemies, which are ever plotting our destruction. These are the devil, the world, and the flesh. Christ, as we read in the gospel of this day, condescended to be tempted by the devil, in order to show us by His own example, as our leader and commander, how we ought to conquer him. Hence David cries out, "Blessed be the Lord my God, who teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to war." (Ps. cxliii. 1.)

II. It is of infinite importance that we should not be overcome in this warfare, for we are fighting for eternity. Examine yourself most strictly, and discover in what points you are weak and defective, and on what occasions you are most frequently wounded. Rely on the defence and conduct of your captain, who is to visit your soul to-day and "gird you with strength unto battle" (Ps. xvii. 40); although "armies in camp stand together against you, your heart need not fear." (Ps. xxvi. 3.)

III. Soldiers are accustomed to take the military oath; so ought you to be sworn to your captain. This duty you have once performed in baptism by renouncing the devil and all his works and pomps. But how often have

**you** deserted your colors ! Surrender yourself again to your captain, renew your oath, and promise an exact obedience for the future. Banish from your heart whatever you suspect may have treacherously leagued with his and your enemies, and say with the psalmist, "Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord! teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God." (Ps. cxlii. 9.)

**MONDAY.****Christ Meets Judas.**

I Christ having ended His prayer, said to His disciples, "Rise, let us go; behold, he is at hand who will betray me. And as he yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came." (Matt. xxvi. 46.) Mark the persevering diligence of the traitor in his bad design.—The other Apostles had been asleep, and were scarcely roused at the third call of their master. Judas, on the contrary, was upon the watch to betray him. How attentive are men to temporal affairs, and how careless in spiritual things! Deplore this miserable folly of mankind and of yourself. "Judas, one of the twelve, came." Oh unheard of ingratitude ! He who had been so highly favored by his Master, appears at the head of His enemies to seize Him. Learn hence, not to rely too much on gifts that have been received without desert. The more you have, the more will be required from you, and the greater cause you have to fear. "Howl, thou fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen." (Zach. xi. 2.) Have you not reason to fear, when an Apostle fell ?

II. "And with him [came] a great multitude with swords and clubs." (Matt. xxvi. 47.) Mark how this wicked rabble came armed with malice, and prepared to gain their evil object, in regard to Jesus. They were

contriving means to seize him, but Judas told them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; hold Him." Then were verified the words of the Royal Prophet, "Many dogs have encompassed me; the council of the malignant hath besieged me." (Ps. xxi. 17.)

III. Christ did not fly, nor render Himself invisible, as He might easily have done, nor call down fire from heaven to consume His enemies, as did Elias, but from his desire of suffering for us, courageously went to meet them. "He was offered because it was His own will." (Is. liii. 7.) Be grateful for his passion, learn constancy in adversity, and do not avoid occasions of suffering for Christ, but meet them rather with courage and resolution, like your divine Instructor.

## TUESDAY.

### Judas Betrays Christ.

I. "And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said, Hail Rabbi, and he kissed Him." (Matt. xxvi. 49.) Reflect on the impudence of this treacherous disciple. He fawns upon his Master to destroy Him. Such precisely are the allurements of the world; they appear to be sincere embraces, but they are mingled with poison. They are darts, that wound the soul. "His words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts." (Ps. liv. 22.) Alas, how many are there who carry the outward garb of devotion, and fondly fawn upon our Lord, whilst their minds are hypocritical and treacherous! How many deal in fair and honeyed words, whilst their hearts are filled with enmity, envy, jealousy, and rancor against their neighbor! Take care your character be different from these; do not embrace Christ in the sacrament so treacherously as did His unworthy Apostle.

II. Consider the admirable meekness and charity of Christ upon this occasion. He neither upbraided Judas, nor did He refuse to receive his embrace. He even spoke in a kind and friendly manner to him: "Friend, whereunto art thou come?" By these means he endeavored to regain him. He styled him friend, in order to make him one; he asked him, "why he came thither," to induce him to enter into himself and change his bad resolution, after having understood the enormity of the crime, which he would commit by betraying his best friend and benefactor, his Master, his Lord and his God. Observe the kind and gentle means which Christ made use of to reclaim even Judas, and learn an important lesson from the example.

III. Christ afterwards said to him, "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 48.) What heart, however obdurate, would not these words soften? Yet he is not moved. We justly condemn Judas for his hardness of heart, without reflecting that we are often guilty of the same crime, because we resist the inspirations of God, the remorse of conscience, or its voice, silently asking us, Will you, then, yield to the temptation, will you sin, will you offend God? The crime of the false Apostle was greatly aggravated by the fact of his making a kiss of peace the instrument of his perfidy. Your crimes are aggravated in the same manner, when you render the gifts of God instrumental to guilt and to your own perdition. Let not the misfortune of Judas be a vain warning to you.

#### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ casts His enemies on the Ground.**

I. "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that were to come upon Him," asked the soldiers that came with Judas,

"Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them, I am He." (John xviii. 4.) These words cast them on the ground. This was an evident testimony of His divinity; for it showed them that they could not apprehend Him unless He pleased. Ponder the singular comfort contained in those words, "I am He," to the virtuous and just soul. They import, I am your father, your protector, and your comforter, your sanctification and redemption. "Be of good heart, it is I; be not afraid." (Matt. xiv. 27.) The wicked have reason to fear; for to them they are words full of indignation and terror, threatening punishment. If these words, now, struck such terror into His enemies, when it was, as He Himself said, "their hour and the power of darkness" (Luke xxii. 53), what terror will they not cause when it shall be His day, and the hour of exercising His power shall arrive?

II. "As soon as He had said to them, I am He, they went backwards, and fell to the ground." (John xviii. 6.) This is an emblem of obstinate and impenitent sinners, who fall without considering their misfortune. Beseech your Lord, that should it be your misfortune to fall, you may immediately acknowledge it by humility and rise again by penance. St. Peter draws his sword, and cuts off the ear of Malchus, but Christ reprehended him for it, forbade all violence and resistance, and healed the servant's ear. Hence you should learn to return good for evil. "All that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. xxvi. 52.)

III. Christ then said, "If, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way." (John xviii. 8.) He forgot Himself, and was only solicitous for His disciples. "Then they came up, and laid hands on Jesus, and held Him." (Matt. xxvi. 50.) Observe the rage and fury with which

His enemies rush upon Him, beating and insulting Him in a most outrageous manner. Good God ! what a spectacle ! “He who sitteth upon the cherubim, is trodden under foot by the wicked.” (Ps. lxxix. 2; Heb. x. 29.) In the same manner do all sinners act; for “they tread the Son of God under foot.” Take care you do not imitate their example.

#### THURSDAY.

### **Christ is Bound and His Disciples Fly.**

I. “Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him. (John xviii. 12.) Observe the meekness with which Christ suffers His sacred hands and arms to be bound. He might, notwithstanding, if He had pleased, have as easily broken the bands asunder “as a man would break a thread of tow.” (Judges xvi. 9.) It was love alone that could cast fetters upon those hands, that framed the heavens and filled the earth with wonders. “He loved me and delivered Himself for me.” (Gal. ii. 20.) Do you also permit yourself to be bound with the bands of charity and the tie of obedience, and whatever other obligations your state of life imposes upon you. “Put thy feet into her fetters,” says the Wise Man of true wisdom, “and thy neck into her chains: bow down thy shoulder and bear her, and be not grieved with her bands.” (Ecclus. vi. 25, 26.)

II. “Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away.” (Mark xiv. 50.) Think what a deep affliction it must have been to Christ, to see Himself thus abandoned by His dearest friends. Mark the instability of human nature. Christ frequently complains by His prophets of this desertion: “Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me; they have set me an abomination to them-



selves.—I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the gentiles there is not a man with me.” (Ps. lxxxvii. 9 and Is. lxiii. 3.) This desertion, besides, was an act that reflected dishonor and reproach on his school, since it had produced such weak and timorous disciples. But Christ was chiefly concerned for their want of faith, in which they all wavered. Take care that you do not leave Christ to suffer alone. Keep Him company, at least by affection and condolence. Submit, without repining, to the unmerited desertion of your friends.

III. Blush for the weakness of human nature displayed in these Apostles. They left Him, although they had seen the numerous miracles, which He had wrought, and had lately received the holy Eucharist, while, in the fervor of his zeal, one had said, “Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee.” (Matt. xxvi. 35.) No sooner were they assaulted by temptation than they all fled. Reflect how little reason you have to trust to yourself. “Son,” says the Wise Man, “when thou comest to the service of God, stand in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation” (Ecclus. ii. 1); and St. Paul commands us all “to work out our salvation, with fear and trembling.” (Phil. ii. 12.)

#### FRIDAY.

#### **Christ is Led to Annas.**

I. “They led him away to Annas first.” (John xviii. 13.) Christ consented to be brought before all the tribunals of Jerusalem, to increase His ignominy. He was therefore first led to Annas, the president of the supreme council, because it was his duty to judge of doctrine. Mark with what clamor, ridicule, and disgrace Christ is conducted along the streets, every one being occupied

in annoying and insulting the captive. How different was His entrance into Jerusalem some days before, when the people exclaimed, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." (Matt. xxi. 9.) Learn from this example to condemn the inconstancy of worldly favor.

II. Christ is brought as a criminal before the tribunal of this judge. The Creator stands accused before His creature; the eternal Wisdom of God is brought to the bar, to give an account of His doctrine before an arrogant lawyer. Behold these insolent Doctors surrounding Him, all filled with the idea of their learning, and rejoicing, "as conquerors rejoice after taking a prey, when they divide the spoils"! (Is. ix. 3.) Hear how they question Him regarding His doctrine and His disciples. Beseech your Lord to instruct you in those things which belong to your salvation, and never suffer you to pursue vain learning, which fills the soul with pride and desire of ostentation.

III. Christ bears their reproaches in silence; but resolutely answers, when questioned concerning His doctrine, because on this depended the salvation of many. "I have spoken openly to the world, I have always taught in the synagogue. Why askest thou me? ask those who have heard what I have spoken to them." (John xviii. 20.) Learn hence to stand resolute in defence of your faith and of truth, and to be silent in your own private injuries. Observe that He says nothing of His disciples, because He could not commend them; for they were wavering in their faith, and He would not say anything to their discredit. Act in the same manner. Throw a veil over the faults of your neighbors, and hide them; never speak of them, except when some good end is to be obtained.

**SATURDAY.****Christ Receives a Blow.**

I. "And when He had said these things, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow." (John xviii. 22.) Ponder here the general circumstances, who, to whom, and what. 1. Consider how severe was the blow, for it was given by an armed soldier. 2. How ignominious, since it was given before so large an assembly, and inflicted on the person of Him whose sanctity of life and miracles rendered Him an object of admiration and veneration to all mankind. 3. How unjust and injurious, for so just and prudent an answer. O amiable countenance of my Jesus, which the angels desire so much to behold, how hast Thou been insulted for me! How have I insulted Thee myself by my repeated sins! From this time I will insult Thee no more.

II. Consider the mildness and patience of our Lord. He is not moved to indignation; He does not revenge Himself, although He had it perfectly in His power, for He could in a moment have annihilated the wretch. He modestly, however, justifies Himself, that He might not seem to have spoken lightly to the high-priest, whose authority and dignity He respected. "If I have spoken ill," He says, "give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?" (John xviii. 28.) How different are your justifications of yourself, when you are supposed to have acted incorrectly? Endeavor to imitate your Lord, "and in your patience possess your soul." (Luke xxi. 19.)

III. "And Annas sent Him bound to Caiphas the high-priest." Imagine what a painful and ignominious journey this was to our Saviour. He was dragged through

the streets during the night, from one tribunal to another, by the lowest rabble. Reflect what indignities He must have suffered, as He passed along, from all kinds of people; even from those who had received benefits from Him. What a spectacle was presented to heaven when the Lord of angels was thus outraged! Condole, admire, give thanks, and imitate.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

### **Christ the Transfiguration of your Soul.**

“The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt be changed into another man.” (1 Kings x. 6.)

I. Christ took three of His Apostles to a high mountain, “and was transfigured before them.” (Matt. xvii. 2.) The same will be produced in due proportion in your soul, by your reception of the Eucharist, if you oppose no impediment to His holy grace. The Eucharist, as the Angelical Doctor observes, in a certain manner makes us the same with Christ. And St. Augustine introduces Christ addressing the faithful in these words: “I am the food of the advanced; grow, and you shall feed on Me; but in such a manner that you shall not change Me into yourself, but you shall be changed into Me.”

II. What an inestimable dignity it is, and what a superior benefit for man to be transformed into God, and to be “made conformable to the image of His Son”! (Rom. viii. 29.) Satan tempted Eve with this idea: “You shall be as gods.” (Gen. iii. 5.) But our first parents were deluded. By the Eucharist, and the grace attached to it, we become united to God, and in some respect partakers of the divine nature, “and even incorporated and of the same blood with Christ,” as St. Cyprian energetically

remarks. Humble yourself, therefore, and say with the prophet, "Who am I, or what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law of the King" (1 Kings xviii. 18), or rather the adopted son of God? "As many as received Him, to them He gave power to be made the sons of God." (John i. 12.)

III. It is recorded of Moses in the sacred volume, that "he knew not that his face was horned" (*i.e.*, resplendent with glory) "from the conversation of the Lord." (Exod. xxxiv. 29.) If you converse frequently with the Lord in prayer, you will in like manner be transfigured. You must make Him the exclusive and ultimate object of your love, and detest whatever displeases Him. St. Augustine writes, "Every one is such as is his love: if you love earth, you will be earth; if you love God, you will be as God."

### MONDAY.

#### **Christ Accused before Caiphas.**

I. As soon as our Redeemer was brought before Caiphas, "the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death." (Matt. xxvi. 59.) Oh unheard-of injustice! Judges whose duty is to protect accused innocence, seek false witnesses against it. They patronize private and unjust envy, and cloak their evil designs under the pretence of public justice. See the Son of God standing at the bar, before His sworn enemies, surrounded by perjured witnesses, and malicious accusers. The innocent Lamb of God, "who did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found" (1 Pet. ii. 22), opposes profound silence to all the accusations brought against Him. "I as a deaf man," He says by the mouth of the prophet, "heard not, and

was as a dumb man not opening His mouth." (Ps. xxxvii. 14.) Learn hence how to demean yourself on such occasions, and to commit your cause to God's providence.

II. So irreprehensible had been the life and actions of Christ, that these enemies of His could not fabricate even the semblance of a crime against Him. Wherefore the high-priest at last conjured Him by the *living God*, to say if He were the Christ, in order that he might condemn Him of blasphemy, if He affirmed that He was. Christ, who had hitherto preserved the most perfect silence, in reverence to the sacred name of His Father, immediately answered, "Thou hast said it." At the same time He alluded to the general judgment to deter Him, if possible, from his evil design, and to wake him from the sleep of death. But alas! "the perverse are hard to be corrected." (Eccles. i. 15.) Entreat our Lord, that you may never be of this character.

III. Consider the false zeal of the malicious and the wicked. "Then the high-priest rent his garments, saying, He hath blasphemed." (Matt. xxvi. 65.) The devout follower of Christ ought to rend his heart with sincere contrition for his sins, which have cost the Son of God so many pains. "Rend your hearts and not your garments," says the prophet. (Joel ii. 13.) This mock court of judicature immediately cries out with one voice, "He is guilty of death." (Matt. xxvi. 66.) O most unjust sentence! O divine Jesus! will you suffer yourself to be deemed a blasphemer, and declared guilty of death; and shall I continually attempt to gain the approbation of men, and to rise above my deserts? I cannot be a true disciple of Thine if I act in this manner.

**TUESDAY.****Injuries in the House of Caiphas.—I.**

I. After Christ had been thus unjustly pronounced deserving of death, "then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and others struck His face with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, O Christ! who is he that struck Thee." (Matt. xxvi. 67.) During that night of cruelty, Christ suffered five kinds of ignominy.

1. They spat upon that beneficent being, who with His spittle had given sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf; they spat upon that face which the angels adore, and which just souls always desired ardently to behold. "Show us Thy face," said the Royal Prophet, "and we shall be saved." (Ps. lxxix. 20.) During this ignominy, Christ, like a meek lamb, verified the expression of the prophet, "I have given My body to the strikers and My cheeks to those who plucked them; I have not turned away My face from those who rebuked Me and spat upon Me." (Is. l. 6.) Is not Christ treated in the same manner now by all sinners as He was then treated by His insolent tormentors? Have not you yourself some part in this ignominy?

II. Consider the second kind of ignominious treatment which our divine Saviour underwent: "And they blindfolded Him." (Luke xxii. 64.) In their frenzy His enemies attempted to veil those sacred eyes, before which "all things are naked and open" (Heb. iv. 13), and to cover that divine face, before which all nations will stand in awe and admiration. Every sinner attempts to do the same, in order to sin with more liberty and less remorse; he does all he can to hide God from himself, and his sins from God; he tries to adopt the expression in the

book of Job, "What doth God know? the clouds are His covert, and He doth not consider our things. (Job xxii. 13.) Take care that you never endeavor to stifle the remorse of conscience by means like these.

III. "They buffeted Him, and others struck His face with the palms of their hands." Represent to your imagination this cruel and ignominious scene, and contemplate every part of it. View these ruffians vying with each other in their outrageous insolence. Then was literally accomplished the prophecy of Jeremias, "He shall give His cheek to him who striketh Him; He shall be filled with reproaches." (Lament. iii. 30.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Injuries in the House of Caiphas.—II.**

I. The fourth insult which was offered to the Son of God in the house of Caiphas was the cruel act of His enemies, when they plucked His sacred hair and beard. By suffering this insult, He verified the prediction of Isaias, "I have given My body to the strikers, and My cheeks to those who plucked them." (Is. l. 6.) Samson consented that his hair should be cut off, from a blind attachment to Delila, which proved very injurious to him; but Christ, from a better love to mankind, suffered Himself to be despoiled of His. Learn from this example to reject and rid yourself of superfluities, and to follow Christ in naked simplicity and unadorned sincerity.

II. The fifth species of ignominy which our Redeemer had to endure consisted in the reproachful language in which His enemies addressed Him. "Prophecy unto us, O Christ! who is he that struck thee. And many other things blaspheming, they said against Him." (Luke



xxii. 65.) On this occasion they repeated their former slanders against Him, calling Him a glutton, a lover of wine, a seducer of the people from their allegiance, and a blasphemer possessed by the devil. What holy Job said of himself was then truly verified in the person of the Son of God: "They have opened their mouths upon Me, and reproaching Me, they have struck Me on the cheek; they are filled with My pains. (Job xvi. 11.) Observe how patiently Christ suffers this severe treatment, and be confounded at your own impatience, when you are unable to bear a slight word of reproach or blame from others.

III. This indignant treatment continued during the whole night. Those who formed the council retired home, to enjoy repose, and the comforts of domestic life but Christ was delivered up to the guards, to be strictly watched, and to be treated at their pleasure or mercy. Meditate deeply on the forlorn situation of your suffering Jesus during that long, and tedious, and painful night. Be ashamed at your want of courage, in mortifying yourself so little for *His* sake, who has endured so much for you, from every description of people,—from the priesthood as well as from the laity.

#### THURSDAY.

#### St. Peter's Denying Christ.—I.

I. "But Peter sat without in the palace, and there came to Him a servant maid, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." (Matt. xxvi. 69.) A few hours before Peter had said, "Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee;" but now, alas! at the first

word of a woman, from shame and fear he denies that he ever knew Him. How many are there now in existence who, not from any humility, but from mere apprehension of what the world will say, are afraid to own any Christian or virtuous action and to profess themselves followers of Christ!

II. Peter remained in the same company, in which he had first denied his Master, and being accused by others of being Christ's disciple, he persisted in his denial a second and a third time. "He began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man" (Matt. xxvi. 74), unmindful of the first crowing of the cock. Observe the different effects of good and evil company. When Peter was with his Master and fellow Apostles, he was so fervent as to offer to die with Christ, but in the evil company in which he afterwards was, he protests and swears that he never knew the man. Learn from this melancholy example to avoid evil company and conversation; and always bear in mind the oracle of St. Paul: "Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. xv. 33.)

III. Some of the particular circumstances which attended the fall of St. Peter are recorded by all the Evangelists. 1. The occasional cause of his fall was his vain presumption and confidence in himself. "Though all men should be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized." 2. He neglected prayer, and fell asleep, after his Master had told him, "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." 3. A woman was the instrument of his fall, as well as of the fall of Adam. Tremble, when you see the pillars of the Church overturned by the voice of a woman. "Tarry not among women." (Ecclus. xlii. 12.) His sin increased by degrees, passing from a simple denial to execration and open perjury. Learn to resist the beginnings of evil, or fatal experience

will soon convince you that "he who contemneth small things shall fall by little and little. (Ecclus. xix. 1.)

#### FRIDAY.

### St. Peter's Denying Christ.—II.

I. "And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter." (Luke xxii. 61.) While this weak Apostle was denying his Master the third time, Jesus was led down from the upper room, where he was condemned, to the lower court, where Peter had remained the whole time. He cast an eye of compassion on His sheep that was perishing, or, as some holy Fathers explain the passage, he looked on him from a distance with the interior eye of mercy, and by his grace moved him to repentance. Observe how, in the midst of His own afflictions, He remembers His ungrateful disciple. With that same eye of mercy, O Lord! "look upon me, and have mercy on me." (Ps. xxiv. 16.)

II. "And going forth, he wept bitterly" (Matt. xxvi. 75), not from mere servile fear, but from a deep sense of his ingratitude to so loving a Master and so great a Benefactor. He felt the force of the prophet's sentiment, "It is an evil and a bitter thing to have left the Lord thy God." (Jer. ii. 19.) Do you, on your part, appreciate the force of the expression, and you will prevent yourself from falling. Oh how often have you, not only in words, as St. Peter did, but in deeds also, denied your Lord, and offended Him, perhaps more than Peter did! Have you as yet duly lamented your fault, as he lamented his?

III. Consider the long penance which St. Peter performed for his sin. He is said to have bewailed it, during his whole life, and to have burst into tears as often as he

heard the cock crow. It is written, that his eyes became two perennial fountains of tears, and that his cheeks were furrowed by continual weeping. Be confounded at your own insensibility. Persevere, therefore, in the works of penance, and take advantage of the admonition of Ecclesiasticus, "Be not without fear of sin forgiven" (Ecclus. v. 5.)

## SATURDAY.

### The Despair of Judas.

I. "Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver, to the chief priests and the ancients, saying, I have sinned, in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xxvii. 3, etc.) Observe how the consciousness of guilt tortured the mind of that treacherous and sacrilegious Apostle. He found no satisfaction in the money, for which he had sold his Lord; but, actuated by fruitless remorse, brought it back again. Learn hence that sinners reap no solid advantage from their sins; but, on the contrary, are pained, disquieted, and troubled. "Lord," says St. Augustine, "you have ordained that it should be so, and it is so, that every disordinate mind is its own punishment." Hence it is said of the impious man, "The sound of dread is always in his ears, and when there is peace, he always suspects treason." (Job xv. 21.)

II. The wicked priests said to Judas, when he returned the money: "What is that to us? look thou to it." (Matt. xxvii. 4.) They were unconcerned in regard to the salvation of their neighbor, and like Cain refused to be their brother's guardian. Virtuous men hold to an opposite conduct; they attempt to prevent their neighbor from sinning, or when he has sinned, to restore him to

grace. They do not say, "What is that to us? look thou to it," but charitably try to relieve and comfort him. They are tender and compassionate to all, and they can say of themselves with the Apostle, "I became all things to all men, that I might save all." (1 Cor. ix. 22.) These are objects of your imitation.

III. Judas "departed, and went and hanged himself with a halter." (Matt. xxvii. 5.) Observe how one sin is the punishment of another, despair of treachery. God often permits a sinner to fall a second time, in punishment of his first offence, as a caution to avoid all sin. Mark, also, the subtlety of the devil, who first provokes to sin; and then, having succeeded in gaining his object, takes away all prospect of pardon. Observe, also, the mad and desperate resolutions of a troubled conscience. The Wise Man had reason to say, "A troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things." (Wis. xvii. 10.) From the ruin of an Apostle, learn not to trust your own virtue; "wherefore, let him who thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.)

### THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

#### Christ the Guardian of your Soul.

"I have sinned; what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?" (Job vii. 20.)

I. "When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace." (Luke xi. 21.) Conceive your soul to be this court, which Christ our Lord, who is both strong and armed, desires to guard, in order that her possessions may be in peace. No being is more powerful than this champion of ours: "the Lord is strong and mighty, the Lord is mighty in battle." (Ps. xxiii. 8.) No keeper can be more vigilant than He is.

“Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep who keepeth Israel.” (Ps. cxx. 4.) All this care and vigilance He uses in your regard, to preserve you from evil. Oh what a happiness it is to rest under the protection of so powerful and so beneficent a guardian!

II. This guardian of yours will to-day enter the fortress of your soul, in the holy Eucharist, to strengthen and defend it against your mortal enemy the devil, who surrounds it day and night, seeking its destruction. This divine table, this holy banquet, is instituted chiefly as a means of defence against our enemies: “Thou hast prepared a table before me,” says the prophet, “against them that afflict me.” (Ps. xxii. 5.) Conceive hence an unbounded confidence in your guardian, and look for the happy hour in which you are to receive Him.

III. In what manner ought you to entertain Him? You must divest your heart of everything that you know will displease Him, or else He may immediately abandon you, and you may fall into the hands of your enemies. Freely surrender yourself to Him, and desire Him to dispose of yourself and everything that belongs to you, as He pleases. Ask pardon for your former offences, and say with the prophet, “Keep me, O Lord, from the hand of the wicked; and from unjust men deliver me.” (Ps. cxxxix. 5.)

#### MONDAY.

#### Christ is Led to Pilate.

I. “And when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people, held a council against Jesus, to put Him to death.” (Matt. xxvii. 1.) How active are the children of this world in their works of darkness, scarce giving themselves time to rest or to sleep! Oh that you were as zealous in the service of God! Think how

welcome this last morning was to our blessed Lord; for the completion of man's redemption was near. Ponder now, how, being in full council, they re-examine their prisoner, condemn Him as a blasphemer, vote Him guilty of death, and finally deliver Him over to the secular power, to be executed.

II. "And the whole multitude of them rose up and led Him away to Pilate." (Luké xxiii. 1.) Think what a distressing journey this was to our divine Saviour. By this time the whole city was full of what had passed the preceding night, and was waiting in great anxiety for the result of the high council. They now behold the captive hurried along through the streets, accompanied by their high-priests and elders, as so many unquestionable witnesses and proclaimers of His guilt. He is considered by all as a convicted criminal, and a notorious malefactor, and is insulted and scoffed at by a barbarous and enraged multitude. Even those, who a short time ago held Him in the highest veneration, and considered Him a great prophet and their Messias, now believe themselves to have been deceived by this sovereign impostor. Who ever did, or ever could, suffer as much as He did in His reputation?

III. When He had arrived at Pilate's court, His enemies "went not into the hall" (it being the habitation of a Gentile), "that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch." (John xviii. 28.) Superstitious hypocrites! They affect religion and conscience in a small matter, and are actually meditating sacrilege and murder. Would to God that you were as accurate and zealous in regard to perfect purity, when you approach the sacred table, to eat the Christian pasch, and that you did not come with a heart distracted and dissipated with worldly thoughts and undue affections!

## TUESDAY.

**Christ is Accused before Pilate.**

I. Pilate having brought Jesus forth before the people, demanded what accusations they produced against Him, when "they began to accuse Him"—1. As a seditious man: "We have found this man perverting our nations." 2. They accuse Him of treason: we have found Him "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He is Christ the king." (Luke xxii. 2.) What odious calumnies were arrayed against the innocence of the Son of God! "The sons of men are liars in the balances." (Ps. lxi. 10.) It is always an easy task to calumniate the innocent.

II. Christ might easily have refuted these unjust accusations, if He had chosen; but He preserved the most profound silence, "so that the governor wondered exceedingly." (Matt. xxvii. 14.) Our Lord fulfilled the prophecy of the Psalmist on that occasion, "I have set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me." (Ps. xxxii. 2.) Oh that you would act in the same manner when you are attacked by calumny! Observe that an innocent life is the best defence against defamation. Learn that courage and fortitude display themselves in silence, and in the contempt of injuries and affronts. On such occasions commit your cause to divine Providence; and then, "in silence and in hope shall your strength be." (Is. xxx. 15.)

III. Pilate, seizing on the last accusation, asked Jesus whether He really were the King of the Jews, and He answered, "Thou sayest it, but My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36), nor does it consist in earthly greatness, pomp, and state, but in poverty and



contempt. "Christ commenced His reign from the cross." Examine whether or not you belong to this kingdom, for if you belong to the world, that is, if you seek after the things which belong to it, you do not belong to Him. Christ says of His disciples, "They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world." (John xvii. 14.) Learn hence duly to appreciate the virtues of the Cross.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ is Sent to Herod.**

I. Pilate did all that he could to set Christ at liberty, for, as he said himself, "I find no cause in this man." The Pharisees, on the other hand, "were more earnest, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, to this place." (Luke xxiii. 4, 5.) Pilate from this took occasion to send Him to Herod, because, as a Galilean, He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction. Christ, therefore, bound as a malefactor, and guarded by soldiers, is led by the priests to Herod. Thus is our blessed Redeemer dragged from one tribunal to another, and exposed to the public view and scorn of the whole city. Good God, how insults and affronts thicken upon Thee, and how fully are verified the words of thy prophet: "All those who passed by the way have clapped their hands at Thee, they have hissed and wagged their heads"! (Lament. ii. 15.)

II. At first Christ is civilly entertained by Herod, because he expected to see Him work some miracle; but the pure Lamb of God, from abhorrence to His impure life, refused to gratify His curiosity, and would not owe His life, which He ardently desired to lay down for us, to the favor or courtesy of the Governor of Galilee. Al-

though "the chief priests and the scribes stood by, earnestly accusing Him" (Luke xxiii. 10), He refused to utter a word in His own defence. Admire and imitate the courage and constancy of His mind, which could not be overcome either by flattery or ill-usage. Learn, also, to be reserved with persons of impure conduct, unless you have certain hopes of converting them. Reflect also what a punishment to the sinner, when Christ speaks no more to His hardened conscience.

III. "And Herod, with his soldiers, despised Him, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment." (Luke xxiii. 11.) The eternal Wisdom of God is deemed a fool, and considered as one who from simplicity had called Himself a king, and is treated as such by the king and his whole court, who took delight in insulting Him. Thus attired, Christ is sent back again to Pilate, and proclaimed, as He passed along, to be an idiot and an imaginary king. "The word of the cross to them indeed that perish is foolishness, but to them who are saved" that is, to us, "it is the power of God." (1 Cor. i. 18.) Good Lord, is it thus that you attempt to cure my pride and arrogance? With how much truth did thy Apostle say, "If any man among you seem to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." (1 Cor. iii. 18.)

#### THURSDAY.

##### **Barabbas is Preferred to Christ.**

I. "Upon the solemn day, the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would." (Matt. xxvii. 15) Hence, desirous of rescuing Jesus, whose innocence was perfectly evident, Pilate put Him in competition with Barabbas, a seditious assassin. He then asked the Jews which of the two he should

deliver. Contemplate the comparison which Pilate makes: Light is compared with darkness, the Author of Life with a murderer, our sovereign Benefactor with a robber. Christ, however, did not disdain it.

II. Consider the most foolish and unjust demand of the people, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas." (Luke xxiii. 18.) It was an ignominious act to compare Jesus to this man, but most insolent and ignominious to prefer him to Jesus. Now is the oracle of the prophet perfectly fulfilled, "I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.) What are the opinions and judgments of this world? What wise man would place any confidence in them, or care whether he were an object of their censure or of their praise? As often as you sin mortally, you pass the same judgment as the Jews did, by preferring in your heart some momentary pleasure to an infinite good, some creature to the Creator, some Barabbas to Christ.

III. Pilate asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" (Matt. xxvii. 22.) The people tumultuously answer, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" (Luke xxiii. 21.) Observe with what modesty and patience Christ suffered these insults. Often ask yourself this question: and what shall I do with Jesus? Will you esteem, love, serve, and honor Him as you ought, or insult, afflict, and crucify Him again? All sinners act thus, "crucifying again to themselves," as the Apostle teaches, "the Son of God, and making a mockery of Him." (Heb. vi. 6.)

## FRIDAY.

**Christ is Scourged.—I.**

I. "Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him." (John xix. 1.) He did this cruel act in order that he might satisfy the malice of the Jews, and afterwards set his prisoner at liberty. This sentence was unjust, infamous, and cruel. It was unjust, because it was pronounced against a man whom the judge had pronounced to be innocent. It was infamous, because it was the punishment inflicted on common slaves. It was cruel, for it was purposely inflicted to satisfy the fury of the Jews. Observe, however, how readily and cheerfully Christ accepts of it, saying with the prophet, "I am ready for scourges" (Ps. xxxvii. 18), in order that I may atone for your sins.

II. As soon as the sentence was uttered, the ready soldiers impudently strip Him of all His clothes, and bind Him to a pillar. Imagine the modest shame and virginal blushes of this chaste Lamb of God, when He was thus exposed, all naked, to the eyes of a rude and licentious multitude. Observe with what readiness He stretches out His arms to be bound, without making the least complaint or resistance. During this cruel scene, imagine you hear Him addressing you, "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 29.)

III. Ponder the cruelty of this scourging. Ascetics say that the instruments used were of three kinds, viz., thorny rods, sinews of beasts, and chains. His pains were greater in consequence of His being already almost exhausted by His bloody sweat, His ill-usage, restless night, and painful journey that morning. The fury of His tormentors was, besides, increased by the surrounding Pharisees,

who excited their cruelty. It was revealed to St. Brigit, a Saint devoutly attached to the contemplation of Christ's sufferings, that the number of stripes exceeded five thousand; whilst the law of Moses forbade that a common malefactor should receive forty. Thus was the oracle of Isaias fulfilled: "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores; they are not bound up nor dressed nor fomented with oil." (Is. i. 6.)

#### SATURDAY.

### Christ is Scourged.—II.

Imagine you see Christ our Lord bound to the pillar, surrounded by a company of insolent soldiers, and examine the general circumstances of this cruel scene.

*Who* is He that is bound to the pillar? The only begotten Son of God, "the splendor of His glory and the figure of His substance. He is higher than heaven and deeper than hell; He is the most high Creator, almighty and powerful King, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon His throne, and is the God of dominion." (Heb. i. 3; Job xi. 8; Eccus. i. 8.) *Where* does this scene take place? In the midst of a populous city, in the open court of the president, in presence of a whole legion of soldiers, and the populace of a large city.

*With what helps?* He is destitute of all human assistance. There was no one to appear in His defence. "I looked about and there was none to help, I sought and there was none to give aid." (Is. lxiii. 5.)

*Why* does He suffer all this? To wash away your sins with His blood. He received on His shoulders stripes which you have deserved, verifying the prediction of the

prophet, "He will overshadow thee with His shoulders." (Ps. xcl. 4.) He suffered from man, for man.

*How* does He suffer? By His own free choice, cheerfully, constantly, and in silence. "He was dumb as a lamb before His shearers." (Is. liii. 7.)

*When* did this scene take place? During the solemn festival of the pasch, at a time when the city was unusually crowded with strangers who had resorted thither from all parts to celebrate the feast. These circumstances increased the ignominy of His sufferings and the confusion of the sufferer.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

##### Christ the Food of your Soul.

"Come eat My bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. ix. 5.)

Christ with five loaves fed five thousand persons. (John vi.) The same Christ will enter this day into your soul, to feed it with a food the most wholesome and the most precious that ever could exist, His own precious body and blood: "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." (John vi. 56.) To remove your apprehensions and fears, He himself invites you to His feast: "Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved." (Cant. v. 1.)

II. Corporal food produces three effects on the body; it strengthens, satiates, and preserves life. Three similar effects, as the Angelical Doctor observes are produced in the soul by the eucharistic bread. This divine food strengthens it by giving it grace and virtue to overcome vice and bad habits. Next, it satiates the soul, by creating a disgust of earthly pleasures; for, as the Wise Man says, "a soul that is full shall tread upon the honey-

comb" (Prov. xxvii. 7), that is, it will despise the vanities and follies of the world. Lastly, it preserves the spiritual life of the soul, and advances it to immortality. "He who eateth this bread," says Christ Himself, "shall live forever." (John vi. 59.) How great a happiness it is to feed upon such bread!

III. The most wholesome food produces no good effect on the body if the digestive powers be disordered. Distempered bodies are endangered by delicacies, because what would otherwise be nutritive is converted into noxious humors. Take care then to prepare your soul, if you desire "to taste and see that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. xxxiii. 9.) Rid your soul of evil inclinations, which prevent spiritual digestion. "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice." (1 Cor. xi. 28.)

## MONDAY.

### **Christ Crowned with Thorns.**

I. From Christ's excessive love of suffering for our sake, He is not content to endure ordinary pains only, but He permits the soldiers to invent an unheard-of manner of torture. They strip Him of His clothes, which by this time clung to His lacerated body, and thus opened His wounds afresh; then they clothe Him in a ragged purple robe, as a mock-king. Observe how this meek Lamb of God suffers His persecutors to abuse Him at pleasure, without making the least resistance or complaint. Then was fulfilled the oracle of David, "I became as a man who heareth not, and who hath no reproofs in his mouth." (Ps. xxxvii. 15.)

II. "And platt[ing] a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head." (Matt. xxvii. 29.) "The crown of thorns was

taken off and put on again several times during His passion," says Catharine Emmerich. O unheard-of cruelty! "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith His mother (the synagogue, which was His mother according to the flesh) crowned Him." (Cant. iii. 11.) Away with all pride, away with sensuality. "Be ashamed," says St. Bernard, "to be a delicate member under a thorn-crowned head."

III. "And they put a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews." What indignities! What torments! Ponder deeply each word of this simple and afflicting detail. Observe how this king of patience holds in His hand this sceptre of scorn and derision in order to incite you to imitation. Then were accomplished the words of Isaias, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, in whom my soul hath been well pleased. He shall not contend, nor cry out; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not extinguish, till he send forth judgment unto victory." (Matt. xii. 18 and Is. xlii. 1.)

## TUESDAY.

### Behold the Man.—I.

I. "Jesus came forth, bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment." (John xix. 5.) In order to move the Jews to compassion, Pilate brought Jesus before the people scourged, and crowned as He was. Conceive what confusion it must have been to our Lord to be thus exposed to the Pharisees and His other enemies, and with what patience our meek Lamb bore this ignominy. Oh, how you are changed, sweet Jesus, from the condi-



tion in which you were seen glorious on Mount Thabor! How different in appearance from that divine Being who sat upon the cherubim, displaying the rays of your majesty to the highest heavens!

II. And Pilate said, "Behold the man!" He was so disfigured, that He hardly had the appearance of a man. How true was the oracle of the prophet, "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him"! (Is. liii. 2.) Who would not melt into tears at beholding so sad a spectacle! Yet the hard-hearted crowd are not only unmoved, but they cry out with unparalleled ferocity, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (John xix. 6.) O most beautiful of the sons of men! where is now that gracious countenance of yours? "Do not consider that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my color." (Cant. i. 5.) The sun and heat of your charity have indeed changed your color, and have given you the appearance of a "worm and no man," the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.)

III. Pilate had long labored to release Christ, but when he heard these words, "If thou release this man thou art not Cæsar's friend," he yielded to malicious importunity. His policy induced him to fear, lest any accusation might be brought against him at the imperial court. Take care that no such human respect ever prevail upon you thus to act in opposition to equity and justice. "He who feareth man," says Solomon, "shall quickly fall; he who trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high." (Prov. xxix. 25.)

**WEDNESDAY.****Behold the Man.—II.**

I. Having represented Christ to the eyes of your soul, crowned with thorns and clad in a robe of scorn, covered with wounds and fainting under them, imagine you hear the words "Behold the man" addressed to you by the Holy Ghost. Believe that the divine Spirit thus addresses you, in order that you may more attentively contemplate the Man-God. He whom you behold clothed in the semblance of man is the Supreme God, the Lord of all things, the long-expected Messiah, your Saviour, the teacher and shepherd of your soul. For love of you He has thus debased Himself beneath the condition of a slave.

II. Next imagine that these same words, "Behold the man!" are addressed to you by the eternal Father, proposing his Son to you as an example of every virtue which you ought to imitate. "Behold the man, behold the servant whom I have chosen, My beloved, in whom My soul hath been well pleased." (Matt. xii. 18.) My Son suffers Himself to be contemned and insulted, to heal your pride; He is naked, in order that He may correct your covetousness; He endures excessive torments, to atone for your sensualities; "He turns His cheek to him that striketh Him" (Lament. iii. 30), to teach you how to annihilate your angry passions. Examine in what you can imitate Him.

III. These words, "Behold the man," may be addressed by you and by the whole Church to the eternal Father, offering Christ as a peace offering for all our sins. O eternal God, behold the man who in the name and on behalf of all mankind offers Himself as an atonement

for Adam's transgression. "He is the propitiation for our sins," therefore, "behold, O Lord! our protector, and look on the face of Thy Christ." (1 John ii. 2 and Ps. lxxxiii. 10.) Say the same often to yourself, with feelings (1) of affectionate compassion for your suffering Saviour, (2) of gratitude for His numerous torments endured for you, (3) of confidence and hope in so much goodness, and (4) of an ardent desire to imitate His example, and of suffering for the love of your Redeemer.

#### THURSDAY.

#### **Christ Condemned to Death.**

I. "As Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying; Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day, in a dream, on account of Him." (Matt. xxvii. 19.) Contemplate the goodness of God, who by various means endeavors to divert sinners from guilt, as He did in this case in regard to Pilate. It was true of him, as it is of all other sinners "Destruction is thy own, O Israel." (Osee xiii. 9.) How often has He admonished you, by speaking interiorly to your heart, by holy inspirations, and exteriorly by preachers and superiors, forbidding you to do this or that, and yet you have neglected their words. Be more attentive hereafter to these divine admonitions.

II. "And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made; having taken water, washed his hands before the people, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look ye to it." (Matt. xxvii. 24.) Yet at the same time he pronounced sentence of death against Him. Thus many pretend by their actions to be innocent, but keep no restraint over their tongues; they do not offend against their neighbors by

outward action, but make no scruple of injuring them by detraction. Listen to the embittered cry of the Jews: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Observe how passion drives its votaries headlong to perdition and guard against its effects in yourself.

III. "And Pilate gave sentence that their petition should be granted." (Luke xxiii. 24.) Reflect how unjust this sentence was. The author of life is condemned to death almost in the same breath that He is pronounced innocent and just. How criminal was the action of Pilate when he yielded to the unjust demands of the Jews! For your part, be steady and resolute in defence of justice, although a thousand deaths should threaten you. Imagine with what shouts of joy and applause the people welcomed this sentence, and how the priests and Pharisees triumphed. Ponder the feelings of Christ at the time. He made no complaint nor opposition, but with undaunted courage "delivered Himself to him who judged Him unjustly." (1 Pet. ii. 23.)

#### FRIDAY.

### **Christ Carries His Cross.**

I. After Christ is condemned to die, He is stripped of the purple robe, and clothed in His own garment again, in order that He may be better known, being in His own attire. He is not relieved, however, of His crown of thorns. In like manner, if you wish to carry the cross after your Saviour, you must cast off the purple robe, that is, every affection to the world, and put on the garment and livery of Christ, viz., mildness and patience, according to the command of the Apostle, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. xiii. 14.)

II. When the cross was brought forth, our Saviour

without doubt exulted, and with greater reason than did afterwards His disciple St. Andrew, who, as St. Bernard writes, addressed his cross to this effect, "Welcome, precious cross, long-wished for, entirely beloved, and now at last prepared to my heart's desire." He then embraced it, and took it on His shoulders. What shouting and laughter arose on that occasion among the people! For His greater ignominy two thieves are led along with Him; but with what difference both of countenance and disposition of mind do they bear their several crosses! Think whom you would wish to imitate in carrying yours.

III. "And bearing His own cross, He went forth" (John xix. 17), between two thieves, and preceded by a public crier announcing the cause of His condemnation. Thus did Isaac formerly carry on his shoulders the wood for the sacrifice, of which his father had destined him to be the victim. See how the tender and feeble members of your Saviour sink under the weight! He falls again and again! O angels of heaven! why do you not ease Him of His burden? *Your* sins were more burdensome to Him than was even His cross; "for the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Is. liii. 6.)

#### SATURDAY.

#### Christ meets His Mother.

I. As soon as Christ was sentenced to death, the news was probably conveyed to His blessed mother by some one of His disciples. Ponder how, on this occasion, the prophecy of Simeon was fully verified; for her soul was truly pierced with the sword of sorrow. She might well have applied the affecting expressions of David, in regard to his son Absalom, to her suffering Son: "My Son Jesus, Jesus, my Son, would to God that I might die

for Thee, Jesus, my Son, my Son Jesus!" (2 Kings xviii. 33.) She resigned herself, however, to the will of God, saying, "Nevertheless, as it shall be the will of God in heaven, so let it be done." (1 Mac. iii. 60.)

II. Notwithstanding her sorrows, it is most probable that she resolved immediately to go to the place of execution, and give her last embrace to her Son. She remains, therefore, with the other women, by the side of the way through which her suffering Son was to pass. Reflect on her agonizing pains when she saw the rabble advancing with ladders, hammers, and nails, and other instruments of punishment. But what must her feelings have been when she beheld her Son proceeding between two thieves, loaded with a heavy cross, and beaten along by inhuman soldiers. Condole with the two sufferers, and grieve that your sins have been the cause of their pains and torments.

III. Consider the words of Christ addressed to the other women who shed tears as He passed by: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children: for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 28, 31.) Christ was the green wood, and we sinners are the dry wood, more calculated for the fire. If the green wood underwent such a heat of sufferings for the sins of others, how great will be the sufferings of sinners in hell, or purgatory, for their own! If the Father so severely chastised the sins of others, in the person of His most innocent and well-beloved Son, how much more will He punish them on the offenders themselves. "That day of wrath, calamity, and misery" will certainly arrive for us all. Weep, therefore, for yourself now, that you may not be forced to weep forever.

**PASSION SUNDAY.****Christ a Hidden God.**

"I will wait for the Lord, who hath hidden His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. (Is. viii. 17.)

I. Christ hid Himself from the Jews; for they wished to stone Him to death. (John viii. 59.) In memory of this the crosses are this day covered in our churches. Christ Himself is termed by Isaias a hidden God. "Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour." (Is. xlv. 15.) Speaking of Him in His passion, the same prophet observes, "His look was as it were hidden and despised." (Is. liii. 3.) He concealed His divinity under the disguise of flesh and blood, His glory under the ignominy of His passion, and both His human and divine natures under the appearances of bread and wine. Hence the Royal Prophet with propriety exclaims, "O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those who fear Thee!" (Ps. xxx. 20.)

II. Not only is the flesh of Jesus Christ hidden from our senses in the holy Eucharist, but for the greater merit of our faith, the virtue and efficacy of this sacrament are often concealed. Hence, not all those who approach it taste of its sweetness. It is nothing less than "death to the bad, as it is life to the good." Even among the good, its effects are not always similar: Hence by the mouth of St. John, God says, "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it." (Apoc. ii. 17.)

III. If you desire to discover the sweetness of this hidden manna, you must master your inclinations and pas-

sions: "To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna." You must be humble in your own eyes: "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Matt. xi. 25.) You must hide yourself "in the cliffs of the rock" (Cant. ii. 14), that is, in the wounds of Christ and in contemplation of His passion; and thus you "may suck honey out of the rock." (Deut. xxxii. 13.) "For the rock," as the Apostle observes, "is Christ." (1 Cor. x. 4.)

### MONDAY.

#### Crucifixion of Our Lord.—I.

I. Being come to the place appointed for His execution, Christ is again stripped of His clothes before the multitude at large, and before the insolent soldiery, who sought for nothing more ardently than subjects of scorn and scurrility. This ignominy, due only to our sins, Christ bears with the utmost patience; and in His own person gives us an example of the most perfect evangelical poverty. In order that no one of His senses might escape untormented, "they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall, and when He had tasted He would not drink." (Matt. xxvii. 34.) He did not refuse the draught in consequence of the gall, but, as St. Ambrose remarks, "He rejected that bitterness which was mingled with wine." Christ wished to drink the chalice of His passion unmixed with any sweetness. Be ashamed at your sensual disposition, and at your murmurs when it is not gratified.

II. The place on which the scene was acted was a high hill, exposed to the view of all. This circumstance added to His ignominy; and the place was loathsome, because it was covered with bones. Christ made choice of



an obscure place for His nativity, in order to conceal His glory, but He chose to be suspended aloft on a cross for His greater ignominy. How different are the ideas of men from those of God! "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord." (Is. lv. 8.) We attempt to conceal whatever tends to disgrace us, but we display to the world whatever is calculated to attract its attention and commendation.

III. Christ suffered at the most solemn festival of Easter, at the time when the city was unusually crowded with strangers, in open day, at noon. The choice of place and time were Christ's, for "He was offered, because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7), at the time and the place which He selected, and with the companions whom He had chosen. This He did in order to teach us by His own example to condemn every temporal consideration and worldly idea.

## TUESDAY.

### Crucifixion of our Lord.—II.

I. When all things were ready for His crucifixion, Christ is thrown down upon His cross by His executioners. Observe how this second Isaac is "laid on the altar upon the pile of wood" (Gen. xxii. 9), offering Himself a sacrifice to His eternal Father. See how He stretches out His hands to the places where they were to be nailed to the cross, to atone for Adam's stretching forth his hand to the forbidden fruit. Mark the streams of blood running down upon the ground, and learn, as the Apostle exhorts you, "to crucify your flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.)

II. How excessive must have been the torments which Christ endured in His hands and feet, in consequence of

the numerous sinews which are found there! They were violently stretched out, and probably disjointed, according to the words of the prophet: "They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones." (Ps. xxi. 17.) Compassionate your Lord, and grieve that you have been the cause of His pains. "Acknowledge, O man!" cries out St. Bernard, "how grievous your wounds of sin are for which it was necessary that our Lord should be wounded."

III. When Christ had been nailed to the cross, it was elevated and let down with violence into the trench prepared to receive it. Reflect on the torture which this shock must have given Him. Oh what a spectacle "to the world and to angels and to men"! (1 Cor. iv. 9.) It was a spectacle of compassion and astonishment to the angels, of scorn and derision to the wicked, but of example to the just, and a sacrifice most acceptable to the eternal Father. Fall down in spirit at the foot of the cross, and with pious affection collect the dropping blood, and indulge such sentiments as the occasion shall suggest.

#### WEDNESDAY.

#### Crucifixion of our Lord.—III.

I. Consider the situation of your Redeemer, hanging on His cross. He receives no comfort either from those around Him or from His divinity, the operations of which He suspended for His greater suffering. If He moved His body, it was tormented afresh by the wounds in His hands and His feet, on which His whole body hung. If He moved His head, the thorns were pressed deeper into it. Not the least sigh or moan, however, was heard to proceed from Him. He offered all His sufferings to His eternal Father for your sins.

II. "And they that passed by blasphemed Him." (Matt. xxvii. 39.) The priests, the citizens, and the soldiers united in insulting Him. They accused Him of a want of power. "He saved others," they vociferate, "Himself He cannot save." They condemned Him of arrogance for assuming the title of king. "If He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross." They said He affected to be the Son of God, and vainly relied on His assumed title: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." Lastly, they accused Him of pride: "Vah, Thou who destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again." During all this insolence Christ preserves the most profound silence. Truly "He was filled with reproaches!" (Lament. iii. 30.)

III. Christ did not come down from His cross, or shorten the duration of His pains, although He might have easily done so, but continues to suffer to His last breath without admitting any comfort, in order to teach you to persevere in good "to the end." Never forget that He suffered all this for your sins. "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." (Is. liii. 5.) Beware, therefore, lest by returning to sin "you crucify again," as St. Paul observes, "the Son of God," to your everlasting destruction. (Heb. vi. 6.)

#### THURSDAY.

##### **First Word on the Cross, "Father, forgive them," etc.**

I. Christ was sent into the world by His heavenly Father to teach us the way of salvation. "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." (Luke ix. 35.) It is our duty.

then, to listen with attention to whatever lessons He may deign to give us. Be attentive then to seven important lessons which He gives to mankind from His cross; be a diligent disciple in His school, in order that you may be able to say with the Apostle, "I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

II. The first lesson which Christ gives is the love of our enemies. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He does not call down fire from heaven against His persecutors, as did Elias, nor did He curse them as did Eliseus, but with unparalleled charity prays for their pardon. Hence His prophet Isaias says, "He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors." (Is. liii. 12.) On this occasion He practised the lesson which He taught when He said, "Pray for those that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. v. 44.) Examine whether you practise this lesson, not only in regard to your real enemies, but also in regard to your companions and friends when they may chance to offend you.

III. Consider the circumstances attending this prayer of our suffering Saviour. Who addresses the prayer? One about to die a painful and undeserved death. To whom does He address it? To one who is most able to avenge Him. When? When He is exhausted with long sufferings, and ready to expire. In what place? Nailed to a cross, and in utmost pain. In what terms does He pray? In few words, but they were full of affection, and mingled with sighs, tears, and blood. For whom does He pray? For sinners; for those very men who had placed Him in this cruel situation. What is the object of His prayer? Mercy. He addresses His petition to His Father for all, even His persecutors, in order that

you may learn mildness and charity towards all and on all occasions.

### FRIDAY.

#### **Second Word, "This Day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."**

I. It was none of the least ignominies which Christ suffered, to be suspended between two thieves. On this occasion was fulfilled the oracle of Isaias, "He was reputed with the wicked." (Is. liii. 12.) Our Saviour was born in a stable, between two brute beasts, and He died between two thieves, to inculcate the necessity of humility; although in Heaven He be seated between the Father and the Holy Ghost. St. Ambrose observes, "that Christ himself was a thief in mystery, since He has robbed our enemy the devil of his weapons, and snatched from him one of the thieves on His cross." Pray that He may rob you of your heart, and that henceforward it may be devoted to Him alone.

II. "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." Admire the riches of God's bounty, and His forbearance. He selects an infamous robber, and makes him heir to His kingdom, and He does this without any delay, and at the first word: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." He gives the thief incomparably more than he asked of Him; for he only asked to be remembered in His kingdom. St. Ambrose again remarks: "Our Lord ever bestows more than is demanded of Him, and His grant is greater than the petition." Who would not willingly love and serve so good and bounteous a Lord?

III. On this occasion there were three kinds of sufferers. One suffered deservedly and impatiently, viz..

the bad thief. Another suffered according to his deserts, but he bore his pains with patience, and this was the good thief. But the third, viz., Christ, was tormented without deserving it, and these torments He bore with unexampled patience and fortitude. Endeavor to be one of the last two kinds of sufferers; at least suffer as the good thief did, and confess with holy Job, "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved. (Job xxxiii. 27.)

**SATURDAY.****Third Word, "Woman, behold thy Son!"**

I. "And there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother." (John xix. 25.) View His blessed mother and other devout persons standing under the cross; and learn thence that the lovers of Christ always love His cross, and that the nearer they stand to it the more they show their love towards Him who hung on it. Reflect on the feelings of the blessed Virgin when she saw her Son, the deserving delight of her heart, so barbarously treated. "Your Son, O Virgin," says St. Bonaventure, "suffered in His body, but you in your mind; the various wounds, which were inflicted over all His body met in one in your heart." Nevertheless, she gave no signs of impatience, nor did she do anything unbecoming her character and person in order that you might learn to compassionate Christ together with her, and to suffer your own adversities with fortitude.

II. "Woman, behold thy son." He does not call her Mother, but woman, in order to teach His followers that those who are wholly employed in doing the will of His Father must pay no regard to flesh and blood. He did not wish, besides, to inflict a deeper wound in her heart

by using the tender name of Mother. He recommends to her care His disciple St. John, and in him all Christians, in order that she, who is so powerful before God, might be a Mother to us all. She accepts the charge willingly, and hence she is deservedly styled by the Saints, "the Mother of the living." Recommend yourself, therefore, to her, and say with the Church, "Show thyself a mother."

III. "Behold your mother." He wishes you to have recourse to her, as a child has to his mother, and to love and respect her as your own parent. By this expression He also teaches you to love, respect, and assist your parents to their last breath. Observe how He recommends the virgin John to His virgin Mother. Be therefore a lover of chastity, if you wish to be ranked among the sons of Mary. Imitate St. John in devotion to your sacred Mother. "From that hour the disciple took her to His own." (John xix. 27.)

#### PALM SUNDAY.

#### Christ a mild King.

"Behold, thy King cometh to thee, meek." (Matt. xxi. 5.)

I. "Behold, thy King cometh to thee, meek." "Thou art thyself, my King and my God, who commandest the saving of Jacob." (Ps. xliii. 5.) Upon other occasions He displays Himself to us as the King of majesty, a powerful King, or the King of terrors; but in His passion He assumes the character of a mild King, who, "when He suffered, He threatened not." (1 Pet. ii. 23.) The same being is, therefore, to-day represented seated on an ass, who on other occasions "sitteth on the Cherubim, and walketh on the wings of the winds." (Ps. xcvi. 1 and ciii. 3.) In this character of mildness He will

visit you to-day in the holy Eucharist; and in order that you may not dread His majesty, He has concealed Himself under the disguise of food, and with admirable patience and mildness suffers Himself to be received and deposited in the breasts, not only of His friends, but also of His enemies.

II. With what ardor you ought to wish that this King would come and reign in your soul and subdue all your unruly passions. He is infinitely wise, and therefore He can direct you; infinitely powerful, and therefore, He can protect you; infinitely rich and bountiful, and therefore He can reward and crown you. "The Lord ruleth me," exclaims holy David, "and I shall want nothing." (Ps. xxii. 1.) If you, therefore, wish to be supplied with every good thing, submit yourself to be ruled by him.

III. You must make a due preparation to receive your guest, in order that He may visit you in the character of mildness, and not of terror and indignation. Go forth, therefore, to meet Him, as did the Jews, on this day, with your fresh green branches of good works. Spread your garments as they did on the road, that is, trample under your feet everything of vanity, pride, and earthly consideration. Say with His prophet, "I will extol Thee, O God, my king, and I will bless Thy name forever, yea forever and ever; hearken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God." (Ps. cxliv. 1 and v. 3.)

#### MONDAY.

#### **Fourth Word, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"**

I. "About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, Lamma Sabacthani? that is. My God. My



God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" A loud cry and a shrill voice are signs of excessive grief. Our Lord was left alone in His sufferings for a long time. He was destitute of every kind of comfort which might arise from the inferior part of His soul; He was forsaken by His own people, even by His disciples; He foresaw, besides, that the greater part of mankind would forsake Him, although He endured all these torments for their salvation. At this awful moment the oracle of the prophet Jeremias was fulfilled, "Great as the sea is thy destruction; who shall heal thee?" (Lament. ii. 13.)

II. Christ might have easily freed Himself from this interior anguish, had He chosen to do so, by surrendering Himself to the joys of the beatific vision which possessed the superior part of His soul; but He refused to do this, in order that in His sufferings He might reduce Himself to our level in all things. He wished also to instruct us how to bear desolation and aridity in prayer and that trouble of mind from which the greatest virtue does not exempt us. Learn, therefore, on similar occasions, to stand resolutely collected within yourself, to have recourse to prayer, and patiently to await the assistance of God: "For it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." (Habac. ii. 3.)

III. If the eternal Father left His Son in this state of desolation, you have no reason to be surprised or to complain if He sometimes seem to abandon you, and to withdraw all consolation from you. Such desolation is frequently a sign of His love, sent to try your constancy and increase your merit. Hence, David prayed, "Prove me, O Lord! and try me; burn my reins and my heart." (Ps. xxv. 2.) Offer yourself to God in the same spirit, and only beg with the same prophet that "He would not utterly forsake you." (Ps. cxviii. 8.)

**TUESDAY.****Fifth Word, "I thirst."**

I. "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst." Christ experienced a twofold thirst, corporal and spiritual. His corporal thirst was inflamed by His last night's restless watching, His interior afflictions, and the loss of so much blood. Our Lord chose to undergo this torment for our instruction. He who "brought forth water out of the rock" (Ps. lxxvii. 16), who satisfied the thirsty Israelites in the desert, and who supernaturally quenched the thirst of Samson, refused this indulgence to Himself. Learn hence to suffer inconveniences for His sake.

II. "And they putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, offered it to His mouth," not to quench but to increase His thirst. What a draught was this for the Son of God, "who giveth food to all flesh" (Ps. cxxxv. 25), "who openeth His hand, and filleth every creature with blessings everlasting." (Ps. cxliv. 16.) How different is this from the beverage which He bestows on us in the holy Eucharist! Be ashamed at your own delicacy in the articles of eating and drinking; and reflecting on the thirst of your Saviour on the cross, never complain or express dissatisfaction at any inconvenience to which you may be subjected.

III. The spiritual thirst of Christ principally regarded three objects. 1. He ardently desired to obey His heavenly Father in perfection, and to accomplish all the prophecies which had been uttered respecting Himself. 2. He thirsted for more sufferings, hence He openly proclaimed His corporal thirst, in order that His pains might

be increased, and not that He might be refreshed. 3. He longed with His whole soul for the complete redemption of all mankind, for whom He was dying. Endeavor to experience the same zeal for virtue and the salvation of your neighbor. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled." (Matt. v. 6.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ's Last Words, and Death.**

I. "When Jesus therefore had taken the vinegar, He said, It is consummated." (John xix. 30.) He congratulates Himself for having now fully accomplished the will of His divine Father, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 8.) He has now fulfilled the prophecies and figures which regarded His life, and of which He said: "Do not think that I come to destroy the law or the prophets: I come not to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matt. v. 17.) He has now terminated His labors and His sufferings, which He endured with patience to the very last, and has drunk the chalice to the very dregs. Well, therefore, might He say to His eternal Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and I come to Thee." (John xvii. 4, 11.)

II. His last words were, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (Luke xxiii. 46.) He uttered these words "with a loud voice," to show that He had triumphed over death, sin, and the devil. He teaches us also how to recommend ourselves to God in our last moments, and to forget at that awful hour all earthly cares and ideas. Beseech your dying Saviour that death may not attack you unprovided against it, or prevent you from entertaining at the moment of your dissolution such holy sentiments.

III. "And bowing down His head, He gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.) O ineffable mystery! The sun of glory is eclipsed, the temple of the living God is dissolved, and the Author of life yields to death. How true is the sentence of the Apostle, "Ye are bought with a great price." (1 Cor. vi. 20.) Do not feel less affected at the completion of this awful mystery than all nature seemed to be on this occasion. For, "the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke xxii. 45); "the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened." (Matt. xxvii. 51.) Be ashamed and confounded at your sins. Tear asunder the veil of self-love that hangs between you and your God. Tremble at the account that you will have to give for Christ's death and passion. Rend your heart with true contrition, and quit the loathsome grave of tepidity and sin.

#### MAUNDY THURSDAY.

#### Christ your Redeemer.

"Arise, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion, ye were sold for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." (Is. lii. 2.)

I. The Church in a particular manner at this holy time celebrates the benefits of our common redemption. We were all subject to the tyranny of the devil and children of wrath in consequence of original guilt, and there was no created being able to atone for the crime. We should all have been lost forever, had not God sent His only begotten Son as "a redemption to His people." (Ps. cx. 9.) This divine Son offered Himself a sacrifice for us, and enabled us to address Him in the prophetic language of Isaias, "Thou, O Lord! art our Father, our Redeemer, from everlasting is Thy name." (Is. lxiii. 16.)

II. We were redeemed, "not with corruptible gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) Although one drop of His blood were perfectly adequate to our redemption, He nevertheless shed it all, and underwent the most severe torments, "because with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption." (Ps. cxxix. 7.) Besides, not content to have redeemed us once, He has left Himself to us in the holy Eucharist, in order that we may as often recover ourselves from the hands of our enemies, as we approach Him with sincere sorrow. O ineffable love! Return Him all the thanks that you are able for this favor.

III. Your Redeemer wishes to visit you on this sacred day, in order to banish from your soul the remains of sin, and to break the chains of your vicious habits. Prepare yourself, therefore, to receive Him as you ought. Surrender yourself to Him, because you are wholly His: "You are not your own, for ye are bought with a great price." (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Centre all your affections in Him, and say with the Psalmist, "I am Thine: save me" (Ps. cxviii. 94), and with the Church, pray that "you may feel in yourself the benefit of His redemption."

#### GOOD-FRIDAY.

##### **A Summary of Our Lord's Passion.**

Imagine yourself standing at the foot of the cross on which your Redeemer is suspended, and hear Him cry out in the words of the prophet, "Oh all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." (Lament. i. 12.) Ponder attentively the whole passion in relation to the four principal circumstances, "that you may be able to comprehend with all

the Saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth." (Eph. iii. 18.)

I. THE DEPTH.—How ignominious it was! He was suspended aloft in the air, as one unworthy either to live or die on earth. He was condemned at four several tribunals, dragged along the streets, and pointed at as a blasphemer, a seducer, an impostor, a glutton, and an idiot. How can you contemplate this scene and still be so tender of your reputation?

II. THE HEIGHT.—How grievous His sufferings were! Though His frame and constitution were of a delicate nature, He refused every kind of comfort, both interior and exterior. He was left alone and forsaken by all His friends; "He became a stranger to His brethren, and an alien to the sons of His mother" (Ps. lxxviii. 9), i.e., the synagogue. If on the cross He had attempted to court any comfort, the weight of His body pressed the heavier on the wounds of His hands and feet, and increased His torments. If He leaned His head against the cross, the thorns were inserted more deeply in it; and if He thirsted, His drink was vinegar and gall. Although He suffered more than all the martyrs, His interior pains were more afflicting than those of His body. Good God, what unheard of torments!

III. THE BREADTH.—How universal were His sufferings! "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein." (Is. i. 6.) His head was pierced with thorns, His face was buffeted by fists and defiled with spittle, His eyes and lips were swollen, His beard plucked, His shoulders lacerated with stripes, His side pierced with a spear, His hands and feet bored with rough nails; in fine, His whole body was bathed in His own blood. Every interior faculty was also tortured: His memory, His intellect, His will. Fear,

indignation, solicitude for those He loved, and other emotions, struggled within Him. "He shall be filled with reproaches." (Lament. iii. 30.)

IV. THE LENGTH.—How long His torments lasted! His whole life before had been a continual suffering. "I am poor and in labors from My youth," says He by the royal Psalmist. (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.) The pains, however, which He suffered from His last supper until His expiration, were excruciating and intolerable, and endured all that night, and the day following, for about twenty hours. Contemplate the cruel and loving scene, and express those feelings which condolence and affection suggest.

#### HOLY-SATURDAY.

##### Our Lord's Burial.

I. After Christ was dead, His sacred body was taken down from the cross by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They laid the sacred treasure in the Mother's arms, fulfilling the expression in the Canticle, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me; He shall abide between my breasts." (Cant. i. 12.) Observe with what sighs and tears and what expressions of profound grief she received the mangled body. Ponder what was said and done by her and her devout companions on this occasion. Take care that you make your beloved Saviour "a bundle of myrrh" in your regard, by frequent and affectionate contemplation on His passion. "Gather this bundle for yourselves," says St. Bernard.

II. After grief and love had performed their parts over the dead body of our Lord, His sorrowing friends embalm it and wrap it in a clean winding-sheet. Christ loves cleanliness even in the grave. Learn hence to

purify your heart in the most perfect manner when you approach Him in the holy Eucharist. Christ wishes His mystical members—that is, the faithful—to be embalmed, as well as His corporal members, with the myrrh of mortification and penance, according to the Apostle, “Always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus; that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.” (2 Cor. iv. 10.)

III. When they had buried Christ, each one returns to his home; for they are not permitted to remain and watch at the sculchre. Imagine what was the solitude of the blessed Virgin and other pious persons, and how they devoted themselves to prayer and contemplation, “waiting for the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Titus ii. 13.) The holy Virgin might comfort herself with the words of the Psalmist, “In the evening, weeping shall have place; in the morning, gladness.” (Ps. xxix. 6.) In desolation do you also have recourse to prayer, and learn to put your confidence in God alone.

### **Observations regarding the Meditations on the Mysteries which succeeded Christ's Resurrection.**

The meditation of the mysteries which followed the resurrection of the Redeemer belongs to the *unitive* way. In these exercises the soul unites itself to God by making His will its own, and by adhering to the divine will as the rule of all good, according to the Apostle, “He who adheres to the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Cor. vi. 17.) Hence the unitive way has different affections, peculiar to it, which ought to be indulged during the ensuing meditations. The chief subjects of these affections are as follows:



I. Admiration of the majesty of God and the divine perfections which we contemplate.

II. Joy and contentment, because God is absolutely perfect in Himself, infinitely good to others, and admirable in all His works.

III. Praise and thanksgiving for His favors and benefits, with a desire of seeing and enjoying Him in order to honor and obey Him.

IV. Zeal of God's glory and the good of souls, wishing that all the world may come to the knowledge and love of their Redeemer.

V. Confidence in the goodness and Providence of God, united with a filial respect, and the fear of being separated from Him by sin, and a sincere regret for having ever incurred His just indignation.

VI. Desire of the heavenly things which we contemplate. Everything on earth ought to appear trifling to us, when we look up to heaven and say with the prophet, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul languisheth and fainteth in the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii. 2.) "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!" (Ps. xli. 2.)

By entertaining such affections as these, we ought to aim at that happy state in which, "beholding the glory of God with face uncovered, we may be transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) We should thus endeavor to become like to Him, by uniting our wills with His, and by increasing daily more and more in the knowledge and love of Him, until at length passing from this dark pilgrimage of human life, we may arrive at our own bright native country, and enjoy the beatific vision for all eternity.

## EASTER SUNDAY.

### Christ Our Resurrection.

“Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee.” (Ephes. v. 14.)

I. When Christ raised His body from the dead, He decorated it with all the attributes of glory. Lacerated and deformed before, it now becomes beautiful and lovely. Reflect on the difference which exists between a body that is dead, pale, wan, and motionless, and the same body when it is invested with the attributes of glory. The same difference exists between a soul in sin, and in the state of grace. The same difference, with due proportion, is to be found between a fervent and a tepid soul. In the state of tepidity the soul slumbers, as it were; it is void of all heroical motion; it is insensible in regard to spiritual things; it is filled with idle fancies and vain trifles; and pursue shadows instead of real and substantial good. It conceives itself to be in a good state, whilst in reality it may be addressed as God addressed the Bishop of Laodicea in the Apoc̃alypse of St. John, “Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Apoc. iii. 17.)

II. Our Saviour is ready to raise us from the state of tepidity and sin, if we consent on our part, and therefore He says of Himself, “I am the resurrection and the life.” (John xi. 25.) He is the cause and author of both, as well in regard to the soul as the body. What a bene-

fit it is to be raised from the death of sin or tepidity, and to be placed in the bright light of the children of God, and to be enabled to pursue the road of virtue with fervor. This benefit Christ will bestow upon you to-day in the Eucharist if you approach Him with fervor. Hence He is called the bread of life; and if we shall owe to Him the resurrection of our bodies "at the last day" (John vi. 40), so are we now indebted to Him for the resurrection of our souls. (Jno. vi. 35, 40.)

III. The marks by which we may discover if we have really risen with Christ are our attention to spiritual things, and our disregard of the things of this world. "If ye be risen with Christ," says St. Paul, "seek the things that are above." (Colos. iii. 1.) Seek, therefore, only heavenly things, and as "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more" (Rom. vi. 9), so you, having risen from the state of sin or tepidity to grace and fervor, persevere in your "newness of life," and continually guard against relapsing into your former state.

### EASTER MONDAY.

#### Christ's Resurrection.

I. Sufficient time having elapsed to evince the reality of Christ's death, early on the third day His divine soul hastened to bring the holy Fathers out of Limbo, to comfort His blessed mother and His disconsolate disciples, and to fill the whole world with His glory. How the holy prisoners in Limbo rejoiced when they saw that the hour of their deliverance had arrived! Free in like manner, O Lord! my soul from "the lion's mouth" and from "the deep lake," and suffer not my enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, to domineer over me.

II. What were the feelings of the holy Fathers, when,

leaving Limbo, they saw the dead body of Christ! How their affections glowed for the being who suffered so much for them! When our Lord immediately afterwards reunited this body to His soul, the oracle of David was fulfilled: "The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty; the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself." (Ps. xcii. 1.) He now assumed the four properties of a glorified body, viz., *Lucidness*, by which He becomes brighter than the sun itself; *Subtilty*, by which He can penetrate the sepulchre, and every other material substance; 3. *Agility*, by which He can move Himself to the most remote place, in the smallest division of time; 4. *Impassibility*, so that He is now incapable of suffering or dying. Thus crowned with glory, our triumphant Redeemer may say in the words of David, "Thou hast turned for Me My mourning into joy; Thou hast cut My sackcloth, and hast compassed Me with gladness." (Ps. xxix. 12.)

III. The eternal Father, joined by all His angels and the liberated saints of Limbo, congratulates the glorious Saviour of mankind, and they exclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." (Apoc. v. 12.) Join your voice with theirs, and say, "This is the day which the Lord has made: let us be glad and rejoice therein." (Ps. cxvii. 24.) Be convinced that the tribulations of the just are short, and their joys eternal, and that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified with Him." (Rom. viii. 17.)

**EASTER TUESDAY.****Christ's Apparition to His Mother.**

I. Christ made known His resurrection by different means: 1. By Saints, who rose in their bodies and appeared to many; 2. By angels, who appeared at the sepulchre; 3. By appearing in His own proper person, "showing Himself alive, after His passion, by many proofs; for forty days appearing." (Acts i. 3.) In the same manner is he accustomed to display Himself to His faithful servants, by the agency of pious men, by their guardian angels, and immediately by Himself. "He who loveth me," He says Himself, "shall be loved by My Father; and I will love Him, and will manifest Myself to Him." (John xiv. 21.) Love Him, therefore, in order that you may receive this favor.

II. It is piously believed that Christ first appeared to His blessed mother in order that she, who had drunk deepest of the cup of His affliction, might be the first to enjoy the glory of His resurrection. "As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." (2 Cor. i. 7.) She believed with the most certain faith, and expected with the most ardent hope the hour of His resurrection, and therefore her desires were not frustrated. Learn hence to desire heavenly things with fervor, and patiently to wait for the destined hour. "If it make any delay, wait for it; for it shall surely come, and it will not be slack." (Hab. ii. 3.)

III. What were the feelings which Christ and His mother experienced at this joyful meeting? What expressions of affection passed between them! The Saints who had long been dead, Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David, might well congratulate her in the language of the

Church, "Thou, daughter, art blessed by the Lord, for by thee we have been made partakers of the fruit of life. Do you in like manner rejoice with holy Mary, and address her in the language of the Church at this holy time: "Rejoice, O Queen of heaven! because He whom thou broughtest forth is risen from the dead. Pray for us, therefore, O holy Queen, to thy adorable Son; He will not refuse to grant the petition, which you address to Him."

**WEDNESDAY.****Apparition of Angels to Devout Women.**

I. "And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen." (Mark xvi. 2.) These devout women brought ointment and perfumes, in order to perform the last offices of love to their Lord, by anointing His body. For this purpose they rise very early, "it being yet dark." (John xx. 1.) Learn hence to spare no expense or labor in the service of God, consistently with your abilities. Follow the principle, and adopt the expression of the Wise Man, "We must prevent the sun to bless thee, O God! and adore thee at the dawning of the light." (Wis. xvi. 28.) Examine whether you be so early employed in the service of your Creator.

II. "And they said one to another, Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mark xvi. 3.) Such were their anxiety and conversation on the way. But they no sooner arrived at the tomb, than, "looking, they saw the stone rolled back." Thus we frequently imagine many difficulties to exist in the way of virtue and perfection; but when we begin to walk resolutely in that way, we find them either entire-

ly removed by the grace of God, or greatly diminished. "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side." God rewards the piety of these women with the vision of an angel. "And His countenance was as lightning, and His raiment as snow." (Matt. xxviii. 3.) Who would not wish to dwell forever in such happy company!

III. "Fear not, for I know you seek Jesus, who was crucified." (Matt. xxviii. 5.) Among the titles of the glorified Jesus, that of His having been crucified stands in the first place. Hence you should learn to appreciate duly the value of suffering, "and to glory in nothing but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.) St. Paul, who was a faithful imitator of the suffering Son of God, says of himself, "I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Imagine what sincere joy the holy women experienced when they heard that Christ had risen! "They went out quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples." (Matt. xxviii. 8.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### **Christ Appears to Magdalene.**

I. "But Mary stood without the sepulchre, weeping." (John xx. 11.) Ponder the fervent love and unshaken constancy of this devout penitent, which prompted her still to remain at the sepulchre when her companions had left it. Hence she deserved to see our Lord the first; for, as St. Gregory, commenting on this passage of the Evangelist observes, "Persevere in the essence of a good work." Learn hence to seek God, when you have lost Him by sin, or when by desolation He withdraws Him.

self from you. You must seek Him with sincerity and ardent affection, in order "that you may find Him whom your soul loveth." (Cant. iii. 4.)

II. Though angels appeared and asked Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou?" (John xx. 13), they could not satisfy her mind and affection. No worldly comfort, nothing in fact but God Himself, can satisfy the soul that truly seeks God. Christ assumed the appearance of a gardener and presented Himself before her; Magdalene immediately applied to Him and asked, "If thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him; and I will take Him away." (John xx. 15.) How great was the force of her love! No place, no danger, no toil, could prevent her from seeking Him. Examine if your love be of so sterling a character.

III. "Jesus saith to her, **MARY.**" Christ often conceals Himself from His servants, and seems to be at a great distance from them, when in reality He is very near. He acts thus to inflame our desire and love; but He discovers Himself at last, and as Sara remarked, "after tears and weeping, He poureth in joyfulness." (Tob. iii. 22.) Beg your Saviour to be so familiar with you as interiorly to call you by your name, and so to speak to your heart that you may know His voice, and with holy Magdalene, be more and more inflamed with His divine love.

#### FRIDAY.

#### Christ Appears to other Women.

I. While the holy women who had visited the sepulchre were returning to the city, Christ appeared to them on the way, and said, "All hail!" (Matt. xxviii. 9.) Ponder here the goodness of God, who affords comfort at a



seasonable hour, and makes no exception of persons. Recollect that the same word was used by the angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, and believe that it produced in their hearts the effects which are signified. Thus speak to my soul, O Lord, "Let thy voice sound in My ears, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely." (Cant. ii. 14.)

II. "But they came up, and took hold of His feet, and worshipped Him." (Matt. xxviii. 9.) Thus were they permitted to touch and kiss His sacred feet. With what reverence and joy they do it! To reward their good desires of anointing the body of their Lord in the sepulchre, Christ "anointed them with the oil of gladness above their fellows." (Ps. xlv. 8.) Conceive hence with what affection you ought to embrace, not the feet only, but the whole of Christ in the sacrament, as often as you approach it. Do not suffer Him to depart from you, until He has given you His blessing, as the angel did to the devoutly-importunate Jacob.

III. "Jesus said to them, Be not afraid. Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee; there they shall see Me." (Matt. xxviii. 10.) Admire the sweet conduct of Christ in removing all fear from His servants, and in comforting them. Meditate on the title which He gives to His disciples, "My Brethren." He who is the King of glory does not disdain to call poor, ignorant fishermen His brethren. Oh what a happiness it is to have such a brother! Love Him, therefore, as your brother, and place all your confidence in Him; for if "a brother that is helped by his brother," as the Wise Man says, "is as a strong city" (Prov. xviii. 19), how much more is he who is assisted by such a brother as Christ?

## SATURDAY.

**Peter and John go to the Sepulchre.**

I. The devout women relate to the disciples what they had seen at the sepulchre, and it "seemed to them as an idle tale." (Luke xxiv. 11.) The Apostles were as yet attached to sensible things, and were not enlightened by the Holy Ghost. The mysteries of the Cross and Resurrection always appear folly to the wise ones of this world. Entreat Christ to enlighten your darkness, and not to suffer you to follow the incredulity or fashionable errors of the world.

II. Peter and John, more desirous than the rest of discovering the truth, ran to the monument, entered it, and found all to be as the women had related. But they neither saw angels, nor did Christ appear to them, for their greater trial, and because they ought to have believed those whom Christ had ordered to communicate the news of His resurrection to them. Learn hence the importance of "believing, although you have not seen," when the object of faith rests on the divine veracity.

III. On the same day, Christ, as we learn from St. Luke, appeared to Peter, who "went away wondering in himself at that which had come to pass." "The Lord has risen indeed," the Apostles exclaimed, "and hath appeared to Simon." Thus Christ confirmed St. Peter, in order that He might afterwards confirm others in their faith. He had denied his Lord and Master; but having satisfied for his guilt by due penance, he now deserved consolation. Among all the disciples He seems to have loved Christ most, and to have felt the most poignant grief at His death. Learn to accompany your Redeemer in His sufferings, in order that you may

rejoice with Him in his resurrection; for "according to the multitude of your sorrows in your heart His comforts will give joy to your soul." (Ps. xciii. 19.)

### LOW SUNDAY.

### Christ the Prince of Peace.

"I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me: for He will speak peace unto His people." (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.)

I. We are told in the Gospel of to-day, that Christ appeared to His disciples, and said to them thrice, "Peace be to you." (John xx. 29.) "He is our peace," as the Apostle observes (Ephes. ii. 14), "thinking thoughts of peace, and not of affliction" (Jer. xxix. 11), and therefore, among many other titles, He is called by Isaias, "The Prince of peace." (Is. ix. 6.)

II. It is our duty to maintain peace with God, our neighbors, and ourselves. Man frequently feels domestic war, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17), and therefore royal David cries out, "There is no peace for my bones" (Ps. xxxvii. 4), and another prophet, "A man's enemies are they of his own household." (Micheas vii. 6.) Our passions and evil propensities may be understood to be these household enemies. This triple peace your Lord and Saviour intends to bring you to-day in the Eucharist, unless you prevent Him; for the Eucharist is properly a peace offering between God and man. It is also a symbol and bond of charity between us and our neighbors; and lastly, as St. Cyril observes, "It restrains the raging tyranny of the flesh, and intrenches us round with perfect peace." Hence, David observes, God "hath placed peace in thy borders, and filled thee with the fat of corn." (Ps. cxlvii. 3.)

III. Christ brought peace, as we read in the Gospel of to-day, when "the doors were shut," and when the disciples were assembled together in prayer. Shut, therefore, carefully the gates of your senses, and retire to the closet of your heart, and the Lord will say to you, "I will give peace in your coasts, you shall sleep, and there shall be none to make you afraid." (Levit. xxvi. 6.) Above all things, however, divest yourself of everything like sin; for "there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord." (Is. xlvi. 22.)

#### MONDAY.

#### The Disciples Going to Emmaus.—I.

I. "Behold, two of them went that same day to a town named Emmaus." (Luke xxiv. 13.) They went, therefore, on the very day of the resurrection, to a neighboring town, and while they were discoursing together on the Lord's passion, and the reports of His resurrection, Christ Himself joined them on the way. Learn from this fact how He is delighted with the pious discourses of His followers, particularly when His passion is their subject. The disciples did not know Christ, because their faith was as yet unsteady. Hence, if you wish to understand divine things, you must possess firm faith, "for if you will not believe, you shall not continue." (Is. vii. 9.) God is frequently near us when we take no notice of Him.

II. How amiably Christ insinuated Himself into the company of His disciples! "What are these discourses," he asks, "that ye hold one with another as ye walk, and are sad?" Like a good physician, He searches for the wound, in order to apply a cure. They answered, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet,

mighty in work and word, before God and all the people." (Luke xxiv. 17, 19.) The testimony was honorable to our Saviour. Such ought to be the character of every one who is employed in gaining souls, and of every faithful Christian. They should join action to their words and professions, and first teach by example what they wish others to practise. "That discourse," says the great St. Gregory, "more easily penetrates the heart of an audience which is recommended by the orator's life."

III. Consider the words of their divine companion, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26.) It was necessary that His sufferings should precede His glory. How can you expect to enter into His glory when you are continually seeking your own ease, convenience, and satisfaction in everything, and when you cannot endure to suffer the least for Him. Reflect how little you have hitherto suffered in God's cause, and remember at the same time that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.)

## TUESDAY.

### **The Disciples Going to Emmaus.—II.**

I. Christ walks with His disciples, and explains to them the mysteries of His passion. How their hearts must have been inflamed with the fire of divine love, which burns in its proper element, so near them! They had reason to say to one another afterwards, "Was not our heart burning within us while He was speaking in the way?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) Fervor is a sign of Christ's presence in the soul, as are tepidity and coldness of His absence.

II. Having arrived at the end of their journey, the two disciples invite their unknown companion to remain with them. He seems inclined to go farther, but they prevail on Him to stay. Although He desires nothing more than to be with us, for "His delight is to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31), yet He loves to be entreated, and in a manner forced, by earnest prayer, to remain with us. Such was the sweet compulsion of Jacob in regard to the angel when he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." (Gen. xxxii. 26.) Thus also did the Canaanite woman, by still urging after the first repulse, obtain the cure of her daughter.

III. "While He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them, and they knew Him." (Luke xxiv. 30.) These singular actions and their effects show that this was a sacramental entertainment, as the holy Fathers generally teach. The souls of those who receive worthily are truly enlightened by the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, and their eyes are opened to see, acknowledge, and love the infinite goodness of its Author. Immediately after Christ had discovered Himself, He disappeared from them; for He does not wish His disciples to entertain themselves too long even in spiritual consolations, but return to their employments. Hence the two disciples "rose up the same hour, and went back to Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 30), and with joy related all that had happened.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ Appears in the Absence of St. Thomas.—I.**

I. "When it was late, that same day, and the doors were shut, Jesus came, and stood in the midst" of the disciples, "and said to them, Peace be to you." (John

xx. 19.) This was the sixth time that Christ appeared on the day of His resurrection, to console and comfort His friends. Ponder the circumstances of this last apparition. 1. It was late in the evening, to teach you that you ought to await with patience the pleasure of your Lord. 2. He entered whilst the doors were shut, to show the powers of His glorified body. You must shut the inlets of your senses if you wish to entertain Christ as He wishes to be entertained. You must be, in the language of the Canticles, "a garden enclosed and a fountain sealed up." (Cant. iv. 12.) 3. He stood in the midst of His disciples, as a master among His scholars, as a shepherd amongst His flock, and like the sun in the centre of the planetary world. Stand thus, O Lord! in the centre of my soul; teach, feed, and enlighten it.

II. He says to His disciples, "Peace be to you." He does not wish them fame, nor power, nor riches, nor honors, but peace with God, with their neighbor and themselves. Learn to appreciate this peace above all earthly goods, and to purchase it at any expense. Pray that "the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding," may "keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 7.)

III. To confirm their faith in His resurrection still more, He asks them if they have any food; "and they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honey-comb." (Luke xxiv. 42.) To convince His Apostles that He was no phantom, He ate. Observe what pains Christ took to convince His Apostles and all mankind of the fact of His resurrection. He knew that the whole system of His divine doctrine was built upon it, and He always appeals to it as to the test of His mission. The incredulity and obstinacy of the Apostles and disciples on this subject, observes one of the holy Fathers, have increased our

faith. Who can disbelieve in the resurrection, when such incredulous and obstinate men were at last convinced of it, and shed their blood in its defence? The resurrection of Christ, however, will be of no advantage to you, unless you rise with Him to a newness of life.

#### THURSDAY.

#### **Christ Appears in the Absence of Thomas.—II.**

I. After Christ had eaten, He ordained His Apostles missionaries, teachers, and pastors of His flock. He first, however, repeats the words "Peace be to you," to show them how necessary peace and unity are in the sacred ministry. "As My Father has sent Me," He continues, "I also send you." (John xx. 21.) He communicates the same authority to them which the Father had given to Him; and as the Father had sent Him, not to seek His ease, but the salvation of mankind, through pains and affliction; in the same manner, to gain the same object by the same means, did He send His Apostles, Hence, apostolical men ought to love sufferings when the glory of God can be promoted by them.

II. "When He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John xx. 22.) Christ might as easily have communicated the divine Spirit to them without breathing on them, but He did so, to inspire His followers with a reverence for similar ceremonies of His Church. By these ceremonies the Holy Ghost is imparted to the soul, or His divine grace given, in many cases by virtue of the work performed, and in others in consequence of the merits and disposition of the person who performs them, or for whom they are performed. Beg of Almighty God to bestow on you something, at least, of His divine Spirit, to enable you,



after having risen with Christ, like Him, "to die no more" (Rom. vi. 9), and not to relapse again into your former sins and failings.

III. "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." (John xx. 23.) Ponder the power and dignity expressed in these words. God never gave the same power to the priests of the old law, nor to the angels themselves. He did not confine this power to any determinate number of priests, nor to the quality of the priests, or of the sins, but gave it for the benefit of all, in the sacrament of Penance. Admire the riches and bounty of God's mercy, and thank Him for such an easy remedy for your sins. The sacrament of Penance is truly "a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner." (Zach. xiii. 1.)

#### FRIDAY.

### **Christ Appears in the Presence of Thomas.**

I. As yet one of the Apostles refused to believe in the resurrection of his Master. St. Thomas had fallen into this incredulity, because he was separated from the rest when Christ had first appeared to the disciples, because he stubbornly refused his assent to the fact of his Saviour's resurrection on the sufficient testimony of others, and because he presumptuously prescribed to God the condition on which alone he would consent to believe. "Unless I shall see in His hands," he said, "the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John xx. 25.) During the space of eight days he persisted obstinately in his incredulity, in spite of all the persuasions and reasons of the other Apostles. Learn

from this to avoid singularity, as a dangerous rock, on which many a one, otherwise virtuous, has split. Be slow to prefer your own judgment in spiritual things to that of others. Meditate on the goodness of your God, who, as He permitted St. Peter to fall, during His passion, in order to show us the weakness of human nature and to teach us humility, so permits St. Thomas to remain so long incredulous, to teach us the necessity of "believing what we have not seen," and what reason cannot fathom, provided we have sufficient motives to be convinced that God's veracity is pledged for the certainty of the tenet.

II. Like a good shepherd Christ seeks His lost sheep. He returns to the Apostles, He enters again, whilst the doors are shut, salutes them as before, and turning to St. Thomas, without an angry look or a word of reproach, amiably addresses him, "Put in thy finger hither," He says, "and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side: and be not incredulous, but faithful." (John xx. 27.) Oh how his heart must have been inflamed when he put his hand into those burning furnaces of love! So ought you to be inflamed when you approach the holy Eucharist.

III. Consider the admirable acknowledgment of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God." He confesses that Jesus is true man and true God, acknowledging His human nature in the first and His divine nature in the second word. Ponder these two titles: since He is your Lord, act not for yourself, but for Him; and as He is your God, give Him the honor and worship which He deserves. Say with the Royal Psalmist, "To Thee, O Lord! will I cry, and I will make supplication to my God. O Lord, my God, I will give praise to Thee forever." (Ps. xxix. 9, 13.)

**SATURDAY.****Why Christ retained the Wounds in His Glorified Body.**

I. Christ chose to retain the marks of His wounds in His glorified body for various reasons. 1. He wished to strengthen His disciples and His followers in the belief of His resurrection, by showing them that it was the same body which was nailed to the cross that had risen again. 2. He wished to increase our confidence, by showing us the marks of His triumph over the world, encouraging us to "have confidence," as He says, "I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.) 3. He carried these wounds as a perpetual memorial of His love towards us, and in order to incite us to return love for love, by suffering for Him. Hence, St. Paul, who fully appreciated His motive, says of himself, "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body." (Gal. vi. 17.)

II. He retains these wounds to convince us that He will take special care of us whilst He is in heaven. "Can a woman forget her infant? Yet will not I forget thee; behold, I have graven thee in My hands." (Is. xlix. 15.) He continually presents these wounds to His Father to plead in our behalf. Hence we may address the Father in the words of David, "Behold, O God, our protector! and look upon the face of Thy Christ." (Ps. lxxxiii. 10.)

III. His wounds are to the Church what the fountains that watered it were to Paradise. They are the sources of every grace to the faithful. Hence Isaiah says, "Ye shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Is. xii. 3.) These divine wounds afford a refuge for the afflicted and distressed soul in all the accidents and crosses which attend us in this vale of tears. Whenever

therefore, your mind and heart are oppressed, enter thou into the rock with Isaías, “and hide thee in the pits, from the face of the fear of the Lord.” (Is. ii. 10.) Remember that that “rock is Christ,” and those pits His sacred wounds. Remain, therefore, “in the cliffs of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall.” (Cant. ii. 14.)

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

### Christ the Good Shepherd.

“The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture.” (Ps. xxii. 1.)

I. In the Gospel of this day Christ says of Himself, “I am the good Shepherd.” (John x. 11.) Ponder how well He merits this title. Jacob was a good shepherd, and he says of himself, “Day and night was I parched with heat and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes.” (Gen. xxxi. 40.) But Christ was still a better pastor, for after suffering these *heats and colds*, He finally laid down His life for His sheep. He even descended to their level and below them, for He verified the oracle of Isaías, “He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.” (Is. liii. 7.) But what shepherd ever fed His sheep with His own blood? In order to elevate them to a supernatural state of happiness, Christ has done so. He gave them His flesh for food and His blood for drink. Who would not wish to be guided by such a shepherd?

II. This divine shepherd will visit you to-day, to feed you, and to defend you from the wolves of hell. There is no part of a shepherd's duty which He does not perform most willingly. Hence He says by His prophet, “Behold, I Myself will seek My sheep: and will visit them as the shepherd visits his flock: I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures; I will seek that which was lost,

and that which was driven away I will bring again: and I will bind up that which was broken; and I will strengthen that which is weak, and that which is fat and strong I will preserve, and I will feed them in judgment." (Ezech. xxxiv. 11.) Such is the Shepherd who invites you to receive Him.

III. It is your duty to take care that there be nothing in your soul which may offend this pure and all-seeing Shepherd. Purify yourself, therefore, from all sin, and divest yourself of all affections to sin. Besides, He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (John x. 27.) Listen then to Him, and obey Him, in order that you may ever remain in His fold.

#### MONDAY.

#### **Christ Appears to Seven Disciples.—I.**

I. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, and Nathanael." (John xxi. 2.) Peter invites them to fish, and they all show a readiness to accompany him: "We also come with thee." This is an emblem of that union which ought to exist among evangelical laborers, whom Christ pronounces to be "fishers of men." The disciples employ themselves in this occupation, both to relieve their poverty and want, and to prevent idleness. Imitate their example; and know that every descendant of Adam is destined some way or other "to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow;" and that idleness is the root of every evil.

II. "They labored all night and caught nothing." Thus human industry is ever vain, unless blessed with the divine concurrence. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Ps. cxxvi. 1.) This is chiefly the case in regard to the conversion of souls,

for in these affairs no man ought to place confidence in his own abilities or exertions, but he ought to ground all his hopes of success on the assistance of heaven. "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 7.) During the night of sin, no action, meritorious of eternal life, can be performed; thus every action, however virtuous otherwise, unless done in a state of grace, is lost. Detest sin, then, above every other evil.

III. "But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." (John xxi. 4.) Thus Christ is frequently at hand to relieve our necessities, when we think the least of it. He asks them if they have any food, although He knew that they had none, because He wishes us to acknowledge our wants before He relieves them. He then commands them: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Learn hence how valuable is the virtue of obedience to the will of God. "An obedient man shall speak of victory." (Prov. xxi. 28.)

## TUESDAY.

### Christ Appears to Seven Disciples.—II.

I. St. John, knowing from the miraculous draught of fishes that the person must be Christ, without hesitation pronounced, "It is the Lord." (John xxi. 7.) Peter immediately cast himself into the sea, in order to approach his Master. In St. John is figured the contemplative life, which is quick-sighted in discovering our Lord, and immediately points Him out to others. St. Peter represents the fervor of active life, which is always ardent and

forward in works of piety and zeal. Apply yourself to both states in proper proportion, in order that by contemplation you may discover the will of God, and reduce it to practice in the state of active life.

II. "As soon as they came to land they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread." He Himself invites them to eat, to show His goodness and paternal providence to mankind in general, and to His Apostles and their successors in particular. He will not suffer those who are employed in His service to endure want, if they place their confidence in Him, and "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice." (Luke xii. 31.) He invites all to partake of His munificence: "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.) Accept of His invitation, and "cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." (Ps. liv. 23.)

III. Those whose duty it is to exercise the office of "fishers of men" ought to follow the injunction of their Master, Jesus Christ, and cast their net on the "right side." In nothing whatsoever are purity of motive and right intention more necessary than in the works of the ministry. "The Apostles," writes St. Bernard, "spread their nets to catch fish, and not gold and silver." It is the duty of every Christian, as well as of the ministers of the Gospel, to aim at the salvation of their neighbors' souls. "God has given charge to every one, of his brother." In his proper sphere and department of life every one ought to be an apostle. Examine how you perform this duty, and whether you be actuated by right intentions and purity of motives.

## WEDNESDAY.

**Christ Commits His Sheep to Peter.**

I. Christ had destined Peter to be His vicar on earth, because He Himself was going to the Father, and because His flock could not be left without some visible shepherd. Before He gave him this appointment, He thrice asked him, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" (Jno. xxi. 15), to show us how well grounded they ought to be in the love of God who undertake the care of souls. Pastors, parents, and masters ought then to be forcibly actuated by this divine principle, for they have all, in their different departments, the care of souls. Examine yourself, and discover whether you have a sufficient stock of this sterling and necessary virtue to discharge the duties of your calling, as they should be.

II. Christ, when Peter had said that he loved Him, rejoined, "Feed My lambs—Feed My sheep." The faithful are the flock of Jesus Christ, and the Apostles and their successors are commissioned to feed this flock, by teaching, preaching, and administering the sacraments, and by giving good example. Those who have embraced this calling have an important duty to perform. Let them remember with fear and trembling the prophetic description of the bad pastor of Israel: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that fed themselves: you ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat, but my flock you did not feed." (Ezech. xxxiv. 2.) Let the faithful, too, remember that they owe respect to those whom Christ has commissioned to feed them; that the validity of sacraments is independent of the virtues or the vices of lawful pastors, and that submission to them is a duty.



III. Christ foretold to St. Peter the kind of death which he was to suffer for His sake, as a certain pledge of their mutual love. Learn then to consider sufferings, and even death itself, as marks of God's affection for you, as they really are. He chastises those whom He loves. Jesus Christ chose sufferings for His mortal portion: He chose what was best; He performed the will of His Father; consequently, the man who has sufferings to endure, imitates his Saviour, and is specially favored by his Creator.

#### THURSDAY.

#### **Christ Appears on the Mount.**

I. How ineffable the goodness of our Lord, who, in order that all His disciples might see Him at once, and be convinced of His resurrection, ordered them to repair to a mountain in Galilee! This was probably that memorable apparition, which St. Paul mentions when he says: "Then He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once." (1. Cor. xv. 6.) Imagine with what fervor the disciples went to witness this spectacle. O that you would imitate them, when you present yourself before Him in His church!

II. Christ appeared to them, comforted them, and confirmed them in their faith. He then said, "all power is given to me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) This power, as God, He had from all eternity, but He received it in time, as man, in reward of His sufferings and merits. Rejoice at the power of that divine Being, who loves you so affectionately. Feel confidence under His protecting wing, and say with the prophet: "If armies in camps should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear; if a battle should rise up against me, in this I will be confident." (Ps. xxvi. 3.)

III. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) He thus institutes the sacrament of Baptism, and ordains, that it shall take the place of ancient circumcision. As circumcision was the entrance into the number of God's chosen people, of old, so is Baptism the entrance into His Church in the new law. But the advantages of Baptism are far greater. But Baptism, or faith alone, is not sufficient for salvation; the observance of God's commandments is also requisite. "Teaching them," continues Jesus Christ, "to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." St. James emphatically writes: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law; but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) Admit, then, the necessity of good works, and observe the whole law in perfection.

#### FRIDAY.

#### Other Apparitions.

I. Our Lord, as St. Luke writes: "showed Himself alive, after His passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them." (Acts i. 3.) Christ remained with them for so long a time, in order to increase and strengthen their faith in His resurrection. Although during that time, He was always present with them in an invisible manner, yet He only favored them with His visible presence at intervals. Like a tender mother He wished to accustom them by degrees to more solid and substantial spiritual food, than the consolation of His personal presence.

II. In these apparitions, Christ as St. Luke observes, "spoke of the kingdom of God." He did not converse with them on worldly trifles, or objects of idle curiosity,

but of the means of gaining the kingdom of God, by tribulations and sufferings. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.) Learn hence willingly to engage in pious conversation. It is very probable, that during these forty days, Christ delivered many instructions to his Apostles concerning the form and government of His future Church, which have been handed down to us by tradition. Entreat your Saviour to converse with you in the secret closet of your heart, and there instruct you in His holy law. Say with the Prophet; "Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy justifications." (Ps. cxviii. 12.)

III. Reflect seriously within yourself, how often God has spoken interiorly to your heart, concerning the kingdom of God, moving you to a desire of ensuring it, by works of mortification, temperance, charity, and perfection. Perhaps you have not paid attention to His voice. Listen to Him for the future, lest He inflict on you some of those plagues of which Moses speaks. "The Lord shall increase thy plagues, and the plagues of thy seed, plagues great and lasting, infirmities, grievous and perpetual, because thou hearest not the voice of the Lord thy God." (Deut. xxviii. 59, 62.)

#### SATURDAY.

#### **Circumstances Attending Christ's Apparitions.**

I. The various circumstances, which accompanied the apparitions of Christ after His resurrection, are like those, which attend His interior visits to the souls of His faithful servants. His apparitions were always of short duration, and they were more or less frequent according to the dispositions and fervor of those, to whom He appeared. The same economy of providence God observes

in regard to the devout soul; He does not always evince His presence with it by sensible consolations, nor are these consolations without interruption. Inflammé your heart with His love, that you may the oftener enjoy His presence, and in order that you may be able to say with the spouse in the Canticle: "If you find my beloved, tell Him, that I languish with love." (Cant. v. 8.)

II. Christ generally appeared unexpectedly, and as unexpectedly withdrew Himself. Thus He increased the desire of His disciples for the favor of His personal presence. In the same manner He visits His faithful souls. Hence, St. Bernard observes: "Joy and content may be found in this world in the presence of the spouse, but not satiety." Do not, therefore, expect, that your soul will be fully satisfied with spiritual joy in this world, but be content to taste only the sweetness of the divine presence. If you love your God, as you ought, you may justly say with holy David: "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." (Ps. xvi. 15.)

III. The times and places of Christ's apparitions, were various. So it is with His interior visits to the soul; they sometimes take place during prayer, sometimes during sermons, or spiritual reading, and at other times, in the midst of occupation and business. "The spirit breatheth where He will." (John iii. 8.) Sometimes Christ appears in disguise, as He did to the affectionate Magdalene, and to the disciples going to Emmaus; sometime in His own shape and figure, and at other times He employs the ministry of angels. In the same manner He manifests Himself to His faithful servants now; sometimes immediately by Himself, at other times obscurely, and more frequently by the voice of superiors, directors, and instructors. Beseech Him to open your eyes, so that you may know Him in whatever manner

He appears to you. Say with the spouse; "Show me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." (Cant. i. 6.)

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

#### **Christ the Comforter of your Soul.**

"The Lord, therefore, will comfort Sion, and will comfort all the ruins thereof, and He will make her desert, as a place of pleasure." (Is. li. 3.)

I. Christ says in the gospel of to-day, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." (John xvi. 22.) Reflect how numerous are "the afflictions of the just," (Ps. xxxiii. 20.) from within and without; how vain and empty are all the pleasures of the world; and that no solid comfort can be found, except in God, and in the pursuit of heavenly things. Hence our Lord is pronounced by St. Paul, to be "the God of all consolation, who comforteth us in all our tribulations." (2. Cor. i. 3.)

II. In the Eucharist, Christ is properly the comforter of the afflicted. Therefore David sings, "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me; and my chalice, which inebriateth me, how goodly it is!" (Ps. xxii. 5.) The Eucharist is an ocean overflowing with spiritual delight, inebriating the mind with ineffable sweetness. "Thou hast visited the earth and hast plentifully watered it, Thou hast many ways enriched it." (Ps. lxiv. 10.) If it do not enrich you the reason must be because you do not bring with you proper dispositions.

III. The necessary dispositions to enjoy the delights of this spiritual banquet are, 1. A sincere grief for your past sins; for "according to the multitude of my sorrows

in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul." (Ps. xciii. 19.) 2. You must feel an aversion to the follies and vanities of this world, and must hunger and thirst after spiritual things. Hence our Lord says, by the mouth of Jeremias, "I have inebriated the weary soul, and I have filled every hungry soul." (Jer. xxxi. 25.) Approach then with confidence, "that ye may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolation." (Is. lxvi. 11.)

### MONDAY.

#### **The Benefit of Creation.—I.**

I. What were you before God created you? Nothing; and you would always have remained so had not God, out of mere goodness, without any merits of yours, given you existence. From among millions of possible beings he selected you. After having decreed to give you a being, He might have given you any other form than that which you possess. There was nothing to prevent Him from placing you among the works of inanimate or irrational nature. "Cannot I do with you as the potter, O house of Israel, saith the Lord; behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jer. xviii. 6.)

II. That God has given you a rational soul, is a second benefit. Ponder the excellences of this soul of yours. It is a pure spirit, like the angels and God Himself. Learn, then, that the nature of your soul requires that you should seek spiritual things, and not attach yourself so miserably as you do to corporal pleasures and transitory goods. This soul of yours is by its own nature immortal, and cannot be destroyed by any created power, and will not be destroyed by the Creator. As you are

immortal by nature, take care that you be so by grace; for sin is the death of the soul.

III. God has endowed this soul with many noble faculties, chiefly the memory, the understanding, and the will. Your free-will renders you supreme master of your own actions. Reflect what returns you can make to the great Creator for such favors. At least, return Him these faculties without spot or blemish, and beware lest you suffer the reproach, "Thou hast forsaken the God who begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord who created thee." (Deut. xxxii. 18.)

## TUESDAY.

### **The Benefit of Creation.—II.**

I. Wonderful combinations and perfections are discoverable in the composition of your body. "Thy hands have made me," exclaimed the enraptured Job, "and fashioned me wholly round about." (Job x. 8.) Observe with what variety of members and senses God has furnished your body. They are all adapted to the convenience of each other, and of the whole body. Everything is disposed in its proper place, so that there is nothing wanting in this stupendous fabric, nothing superfluous. Hence David cries out, "Thou hast formed me and hast laid Thy hand upon me. Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach it." (Ps. cxxxviii. 5.) That is, as St. Basil explains it, "In the structure of my body Thy knowledge is magnificently displayed, and I cannot reach it."

II. Every member of your body is a particular and distinct favor of God. Reflect how wretched you would be had you been born blind, deaf, or dumb. How grateful you would be to the man who should restore to you

the use of any one of your limbs if you had lost it! How much more grateful, then, ought you to be to God for having given them to you whole and entire! Take care that you do not abuse any of them to the displeasure and dishonor of their Creator, "by yielding them to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, but yield them to serve justice unto sanctification." (Rom. vi. 19.)

III. How just it is that he who created you entirely should likewise entirely possess you. For "Who," asks the Apostle, "planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" (1 Cor. ix. 7.) God has planted you as a choice vine in his vineyard; yield Him, therefore, the fruits of piety, charity, patience, and every Christian virtue. "All that you possess," writes St. Bernard, "you owe to Him from whom you have received it."

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Benefit of Preservation.—I.**

I. By creation God gave you yourself but once; but by preservation He does the same every moment of your life. Unless He preserved you, you would immediately fall into your original non-existence. The noon-beam has not so strict a dependence on the sun as you have on God. The man who is held by another from a high tower over a deep precipice, every moment in danger of falling, would not be so daringly mad as to revile and insult the man who held him. So ought you not to dare to insult God, who holds your thread of mortal existence in His hand.

II. As you cannot live without God, so you cannot exercise any action of life without His immediate concurrence. Without this you cannot even move your hand, open your eyes, or utter a word; "for in him," ex-



claimed St. Paul, "we live, and we move, and we are." (Acts xvii. 28.) Hence St. Augustine thus expressed his gratitude: "You place me under obligations to you, O Lord, every moment, because every moment you bestow great benefits on me."

III. God does not merely preserve your life, but guards it from innumerable evils and miseries which others suffer. Thus the miseries of others constitute your benefit. Ask yourself why you are not, like many others, blind, deaf, dumb, lame, or oppressed with a thousand diseases and infirmities? Why have you not, like so many others, been slain or met with accidental death? God has hitherto delivered you from all these misfortunes, in order that you, being grateful for so many favors, "might serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him, all your days." (Luke i. 74.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### **The Benefit of Preservation.—II.**

I. As your preserver, God has not only removed evils from you, as we have already seen, but, acting the part of a most indulgent parent, He has provided you most abundantly with every necessary and convenience. His hands have furnished this lower world for you as a temporary habitation; He has enlightened it with the sun, moon, and stars for your benefit and delight, and has stored it with living animals for your use. In fine, whatever you admire on the surface of the earth or below it, whatever ranges on it or swims in the sea, or inhabits the regions of the air, are all yours. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; moreover, the beasts also of the fields, the birds of the air and the

fishes of the sea, which pass through the paths of the sea." (Ps. viii. 5, 8.) "If there be such delight in the earth, which is man's prison-house," exclaims St. Augustine, "what must there be in our future palace?"

II. Not content with having provided all these things for you, God condescends to concur with creatures for your advantage. In the fire He warms you; He enlightens you in the sun; in the air He refreshes you; and He feeds you in your food. Say, therefore, with St. Augustine, "As there is no hour or moment, O Lord, in which I do not enjoy your benefits, so ought there to be no moment in which you are not present before my eyes by remembrance, and in which I do not love you with all my strength."

III. God has bestowed other benefits on you that belong to the mind. Such are good education, parental care, the counsel and example of the virtuous, the endowments of knowledge, the conveniences of life, perhaps with little labor of yours, which others have to obtain with the sweat of their brow, and sometimes at the imminent danger of losing their souls. Say with the Psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv. 3.) He desires nothing in return but yourself. "My son," He says, "give Me thy heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.)

## FRIDAY.

### The Benefit of Redemption.—I.

I. In order that you may the better understand the extent of this benefit, reflect how miserable you would be were you to become a slave to some cruel tyrant, who should force you to endure perpetual imprisonment, hunger, and thirst, and frequent scourges. Remember

what the children of Israel suffered in their Egyptian bondage and their captivity at Babylon. Reflect what you would have to suffer were you enslaved by some unfeeling Turkish despot, and what would you not give for your ransom?

II. The slavery of sin is far more severe than this. Sin enslaves us to the devil, as St. Paul observes (2 Tim. ii. 26), and renders us subject to the torments of hell. We were all thus enslaved, and there were no means by which we could be delivered from this tyranny, had not the only begotten Son of God descended from heaven and undertaken to atone for our sins, and deliver us from this cruel bondage. We owe this benefit to Him "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." (Titus ii. 14.)

III. Christ did not do this for His own advantage, or because He had any need of us. "Thou art my God," says David, "for Thou hast no need of my goods." (Ps. xv. 2.) He did not act thus from any deserts of ours, which then neither were nor could be any, but from His own mere goodness and mercy. "In His love and in His mercy," says Isaias, "He redeemed them, and lifted them up all the days of old." (Is. lxiii. 9.) Who would not love so loving a Lord, and surrender himself entirely to that Being, without whose assistance he would have been entirely lost?

#### SATURDAY.

#### **The Benefit of Redemption.—II.**

I. The manner in which Christ redeemed you from the slavery of sin was most efficacious. The Royal Prophet might well tell the world that "with Him there is plentiful redemption." (Ps. cxxix. 7.) By His absolute

power, He might have remitted all sin without assuming human nature; but if He did choose to unite His divinity to human nature, He might have satisfied the rigor of His Father's justice by the least suffering after His incarnation. But your Redeemer suffered so much in order that "where sin abounded, grace" also might "abound more." (Rom. v. 20.) He wished also to leave you a perfect example, "that you should follow His steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.)

II. Christ suffered in every scene of His life. His pains commenced in the manger, and they were continued in His circumcision, and during His flight into Egypt. He suffered from hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness. During His passion He was scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, and nailed to an ignominious cross. He suffered all this for His enemies, that is, for all sinners. Who ever suffered so much for his friends? Hence the Church, unable to restrain her feelings of gratitude and admiration, gives vent to them in the enthusiastic words, on the eve of Easter, "O happy fault, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer."

III. What return ought you to make to such a Redeemer? Ask yourself, with St. Bernard, "If I owe my whole self to God for having been created, what more shall I add for having been restored, and restored, too, in such a manner? For I was not so easily restored as created." Consider yourself henceforward as the servant of Jesus Christ; thank Him for the favor He has bestowed on you, and surrender yourself entirely to His service. Reflect often on the admonition of the Apostle, "You are bought with a great price; glorify and bear God in your body." (1 Cor. vi. 20.)

**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.****Christ your Advocate.**

"Behold, the Lord God is my helper; who is he that shall condemn me." (Is. l. 9.)

I. We are told in the Gospel of the present Sunday, that Christ said to His disciples, "I go to Him that sent Me, and it is expedient for you that I go." (John xvi. 5, 7.) Our Lord went to His eternal Father to plead for us, in the supreme consistory of heaven, as our patron, advocate, and intercessor. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just," says St. John (1 Ep. ii. 1); and St. Paul writes, "There is one mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5.) It is, therefore, truly expedient that He should go to the Father to intercede for us, for we have been guilty of many crimes.

II. What an advantage it would be to a criminal to have in an earthly court the king's own and only son for his advocate, willing and desirous of promoting his pardon. Such a one in your regard is Jesus Christ, "who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Apoc. i. 5.) He is infinitely powerful, and consequently well able to obtain for you every favor and grace of which you stand in need, for He says, "All things are delivered to Me by My Father." (Luke x. 22.)

III. You ought to wish for the happy hour, in which your Advocate will enter your soul in the holy Eucharist. Then you can unfold all your miseries, necessities, and distress, and induce him to plead for your efficacious redress. Take care, then, that your soul be pure from sin and divested of every affection to it; "for wisdom,"

says the Wise Man, "will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin." (Wis. i. 4.) Remember that your Advocate is uncreated wisdom itself.

## MONDAY.

### The Benefit of Adoption.—I.

I. "Behold, what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be named, and should be the sons of God!" (1 John iii. 1.) This Father of mercy was not satisfied with sending His only Son to redeem us; He has also adopted us for His children. This favor is greater in proportion to the meanness of the person adopted, the dignity of God who adopts you, and the sublime condition to which He elevates you. What is more vile or base than man, and what more exalted than God? As to his body, man is nothing but a composition of the dust of the earth, subject to a thousand infirmities, and destined to become ultimately the food of loathsome worms. As to His soul He is constantly subject to sin, an abyss of ignorance, and a model of inconstancy. Reflect how contracted are his intellectual faculties, how small is His portion of knowledge, and to what miseries He is subject. Hence Job exclaims, "What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him, or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17.)

II. On the other hand, God, who has adopted you, is infinitely great, good, and almighty. What a dignity it is to be the adoptive Son of such a being! If it were considered a wonderful elevation in the Patriarch Joseph to be taken out of prison and made Lord of Egypt (Gen. xli. 40), in Saul to have been taken by the Prophet when seeking his father's asses, and anointed

king (1 Kings 9), and in David from "following the ewes" (Ps. lxxvii. 70), to be raised to a throne, what ought we to think of the dignity of becoming the adoptive sons of God? Dust and ashes are associated to the sovereign Lord of all things, and the companion of worms is destined to become the companion of angels.

III. Under what obligations you are to God for having thus honored you, "raising the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor man out of the dung-hill, that He may place him with princes." (Ps. cxii. 7.) O exalted honor! you who do not deserve, even to be the servant of God, are made His adoptive Son. "Acknowledge, therefore, O Christian! your dignity," writes the eloquent St. Leo, "and since you are become a partaker of the divine nature, do not by any unworthy behavior degenerate to your former baseness."

## TUESDAY.

### **The Benefit of Adoption.—II.**

I. Many advantageous consequences result to man, from the benefit of adoption. It places us under the special protection of God, who governs, maintains, and defends us, as an affectionate father does his children. Hence royal David exclaims, "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him." (Ps. cii. 13.) By the prophet Isaias he makes still greater promises: "Can a mother forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Is. xlix. 15.) How great is our security when we are protected by such a Father! When He stands with us, we need not fear who stands against us.

II. By this adoption we are made "partakers of the

divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4) and, in an inferior sense, even gods, according to the expression of the Psalmist, "I said ye are Gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High." (Ps. lxxxi. 6.) By this adoption we partake in some degree of the divine perfections—such as wisdom, fortitude, justice, charity, and God's other attributes, which are His by His own nature, and communicated to us by grace. Learn, then, duly to appreciate a benefit, which assimilates you in some respect to God.

III. The benefit of adoption makes us heirs to the kingdom of heaven, according to the expression of the Apostle, "You are heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) Consider heaven, therefore, as your inheritance, and say with the philosopher whom the light of reason instructed in this truth, "I am born for greater things than to be the slave of my own flesh." Direct your thoughts and affections, therefore, to heaven, where your eternal treasure exists; condemn mortal things, and surrender your mind to such only as are great and everlasting, and "do not degenerate from the lofty thoughts of the sons of God."

## WEDNESDAY

### The Benefit of Adoption.—III.

I. We have contracted many obligations, in consequence of our adoption by Almighty God. We are bound, in the first place, to love tenderly, and from our whole hearts, so affectionate a parent. If earthly children naturally love their parents, from whom they have received only what is temporal, with how much greater ardor ought you to love your God, "who is your Father, that hath possessed you, and made you, and created you?" (Deut. xxxii. 6.)



II. We are bound not only to love God, but also to honor him as our Father, and to show that respect and reverence which His service and our duty require. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long lived upon the land" (Exod. xx. 12); and God Himself says, by the prophet Malachias, "If, then, I be a father, where is my honor?" (Malach i. 6.) We cannot show this respect and honor, to our Father without imitating Him. Christ therefore says, "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. v. 48.) And St. Paul, who had deeply imbibed the spirit of his Master, tells his Ephesian converts, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children." (Eph. v. 1.) You must imitate His sanctity and impeccability, His charity, mercy, and justice, together with His other perfections. "Ye shall be holy," He says, "because I am holy." (Lev. xi. 45.)

III. We are bound, in consequence of the benefit of adoption, to fear our Father. "Let every one fear His Father." (Lev. xix. 3.) If children of this world are afraid of offending their parents, lest they should be disinherited by them, how much more reason have we to fear God? Beware, lest it may ever be said of you, "I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised me." (Is. i. 2.) You will despise Him, if instead of His will, you follow your own, and prefer your own ideas to His counsels and commands.

#### THURSDAY.

#### Benefits from the Sacraments.

I. Your heavenly Father is not simply content to have adopted you for His son, but He has employed various means, in order to make you persevere in the

grace of that adoption. The chief of these means are the seven sacraments, through which, as through so many channels, He wishes His favorite graces to flow, and render your soul fertile in good works. In these you can find an antidote against every disease, and assistance in every distress. Hence, the Church may say to you with the Prophet: "You shall draw waters with joy, out of the Saviour's fountain." (Is. xii. 3.)

II. The infinite wisdom of God has adapted the sacraments to all our spiritual wants and necessities. By Baptism we are regenerated, freed from original sin, and admitted into the Church. This regenerated life is increased and strengthened by Confirmation. The Eucharist is its solid and substantial support. If it be attacked by any spiritual disease, or even if it be vitally injured, we have a remedy in Penance, and Extreme Unction arms it for the last and most dangerous combat. Holy Orders and Matrimony are instituted, in order to enable those, who embrace them, to perform their important duties consistently with the Spirit of God and religion. We may truly say with the Psalmist, "Blessed are they, that dwell in thy house, O Lord," (Ps. lxxxiii. 5.) that is in the true Church of Jesus Christ.

III. These fountains of grace are open to all; none are excluded from them, however poor they may be. Hence the Prophet exclaims: "All ye that thirst, come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste; buy and eat." (Is. lv. 1.) These fountains are continually flowing, like the widow's oil mentioned in the fourth book of Kings, as long as there are empty vessels (that is, humble souls,) to receive the life-giving waters. The efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on the virtues or vices of their ministers; but they infallibly work their effect, by virtue of their divine institution,

provided the receiver places no impediment. Be thankful to God for so great a benefit, and always approach them worthily.

### FRIDAY.

#### **Benefits from the Guardianship of Angels.**

I. "He hath given His angels charge over thee," says holy David, "to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc. 11.) Our heavenly Father is not content to make us His sons; but, with unparalleled kindness, provides us with tutors and guardians. This charge He has committed to the angels: they are the ministers of His graces,—they guard and protect us. "Are they not all ministering spirits," asks the Apostle, "sent to minister for these, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.)

II. To whom has He committed this charge of us? To the angels, who are His most noble creatures, who are pure spirits, immortal by nature, "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." (Exod. xxviii. 12.) They are more powerful than the most numerous and best disciplined army; they are adorned with every kind of grace and glory, and they continually enjoy the beatific vision. To the care of these superior beings, weak, frail and imperfect man is committed. "In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. xc. 12.) Learn to appreciate the favor, which God does you, in placing you under the protection of His angelic spirits.

III. The conviction, that you are under the special protection of the angels, ought to excite you, as St. Bernard remarks, "to reverence, devotion, and confidence in them: reverence, because they are present;

devotion, for their benevolence; and confidence in their vigilant custody." "If I should give myself to be thy servant," said young Tobias to Raphael his guardian, "I should not make a worthy return for thy care." (Tob. ix. 2.) Reverence, therefore, your angel guardian with affection; and do not presume to do in his presence, that, which you would be ashamed of doing before men. "Take notice of him, and hear his voice," says the Lord, "and I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and I will afflict them that will afflict thee" (Exod. xxiii. 21), "and my angel shall go before thee." (Exod. 23.)

#### SATURDAY.

#### **Benefits from the Patronage of Saints.**

I. Our heavenly Father has not only provided us with angel-guardians, but also with patrons, advocates, and models, in the Saints, who reign with God in heaven. He is our judge, and we have in the saints interposers to plead in our behalf, and to move Him to mercy. "Go to my servant Job," He says, "and offer for yourself a holocaust, and my servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept, that folly may not be imputed to you." (Job. xlii. 8.)

II. With what care and affection the Saints in heaven perform their office, and what benefits result to us from their intercession! It is said of holy Jeremias, in the second book of Machabees, "This is a lover of his brethren and of the people of Israel, this is he that prayeth much for the people, and for all the holy city." (2. Mach. xv. 14.) What confidence may we not place in the protection of advocates so powerful! If it be an object of high importance to possess a powerful friend in the

court of a worldly prince, of how much more consequence is it, to have numerous friends in the court of heaven?

III. How diligent you ought to be in honoring and in invoking the Saints, and especially those of your name, and your particular patrons, in order that they may obtain for you, the blessings and graces of heaven! Above all, reverence and pray to the Queen of angels and saints, who, as St. Epiphanius styles her, "is the mother of the living." She surpasses all the citizens of heaven, both in her affection for us, and in power with her divine Son. Thank your Saviour for having committed your cause to so potent an advocate, and recommend yourself with all earnestness to her care, "for she never denies help to those, who petition for it, nor does she ever intercede in vain with her Son."

#### FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

#### Christ the Bestower of all Good Gifts.

"Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor."  
(Ps. lxxxii. 1.)

I. Christ tells his disciples in the gospel of the present Sunday. "Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name, ask, and you shall receive." (John xvi. 24.) Imagine yourself, on one hand, to be a poor, forlorn, naked beggar, standing in need of every thing necessary for your spiritual life, and Christ, on the other, infinitely rich, infinitely liberal, and desirous of making you a partaker of His bounty. Listen to His solemn invitation, "Ask, and you shall receive." Never did the most bounteous sovereign make so liberal a promise. "Come over to Me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with My fruits."

(Ecclus. xxiv. 26.) He is more willing to give than we are to receive.

II. This bountiful Lord will visit you to-day in the Eucharist, and if you be grateful in His sight, He will say to you, as King Assuerus did to Esther, "What is thy petition, *Esther*, that it may be granted thee, and what wilt thou have done? although thou askest half my kingdom, thou shalt have it." (Est. vii. 2.) Examine what you stand most in need of, and be ready with your petition, as Esther was. Adorn your soul, as she did her person, in order that you may please your Lord, when He comes.

III. There are impediments, which will render your petitions of no avail. 1. "God doth not hear sinners." (John ix. 31.) As long, then, as you persist in sin, you will not be heard. 2. He does not grant the request of those, who pray for vain and unprofitable things; but dismisses their petition with a rebuke, "you know not what you ask." (Matt. xx. 22.) Those are unheard, who pray with tepidity, "Because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc. iii. 16.) Your Lord requires perseverance and constancy in your prayer. "He who perseveres in knocking" (Luke xi.), "will receive the loaves, even for his importunity, as many as he needeth." (Luke v. 8.)

## MONDAY.

### The Benefit of Prayer.—I.

I. We are continually invited by the Church to pray, particularly during these rogation days. The dignity and excellence of prayer are very great. Prayer is an act of religious worship offered to God, and accepted by

Him, as sacrifice and incense, according to the expression of David, "Let my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight; the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice." (Ps. cxl. 2.) By prayer we become companions of the angels, and treat familiarly with God Himself. God conceives Himself honored by our prayers, as He tells us by His prophet, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.)

II. In consequence of the miseries of this mortal life, and its continual dangers, prayer is essentially necessary for us. The life of our soul is in constant peril from the devil, who is "as a roaring lion, going about, seeking whom he may devour," (1. Peter v. 8.), and from the allurements of pleasure, which continually assail us. Our mortal life is never exempt from dangers, arising from war, famine and pestilence, from sickness, loss of goods, from the death of our friends, and from innumerable other crosses and afflictions. Hence, we ought to address our Lord in the language of king Josaphat, "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee." (2 Paralip. xx. 12.)

III. By His general providence, God might have redressed all our evils and necessities, without our having recourse to Him by prayer. This is His conduct in relation to every other creature. But, in order to endear us the more to Him, He has decreed, that we should beg these favors from Him, and thus show our dependence on Him, and acknowledge Him to be the author of all good. Hence, He has given us an express command, and enforced it by His Son Jesus Christ, who teaches us, that "we ought always to pray." (Luke xviii. 1.) Reflect upon your spiritual and temporal necessities, "and go with confidence to the throne of grace, that you may

obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv. 16.)

**TUESDAY.****The Benefit of Prayer.—II.**

I. Consider more in particular the benefits and efficacy of this holy exercise. St. Jerome says of it, "it overcomes the invincible, and bindeth down the Almighty;" that is, it interests His mercy in our behalf, and ties down the hands of His justice from punishing us: "Let Me alone," said God to Moses, when he was praying for the people, "that My wrath may be kindled against them." (Exod. xxxii. 10.) Prayer is a general resource against all difficulties and temptations, and as St. Prosper says, "is a scourge, to the devil." Moses, by lifting up his hands in prayer, obtained victory for the children of Israel over the Amalecites. (Exod. xvii. 11.) Josue by his prayers, obtained from God, that the day should be lengthened, by making the sun and moon appear to stand still, "the Lord obeying the voice of man." (Jos. x. 14.) With how much more reason may we hope for spiritual blessings, when we fervently pray for them!

II. "Prayer," says St. Augustine, "is the key of heaven," because it procures for us every heavenly blessing. By it we receive the spirit of God; for Christ says, "Your Father from heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke xi. 13.) Prayer increases sanctifying grace, and procures us more frequent supplies of actual grace. It strengthens our virtues, and every supernatural gift. Our faith, besides, in this holy exercise is enlivened, our hopes are invigorated, and our charity inflamed. For in prayer



we acknowledge God to be the author of our faith, the foundation of our hope, and the object of our affections.

III. All these favors, and whatever else we can desire for our spiritual goods, our Lord is readier to bestow, than we to ask. "It shall come to pass," He says, "that before they call, I will hear, as they are yet speaking I will hear." (Is. lxxv. 24.) If we do not obtain what we ask for, the reason is, either because we offer Him undue petitions, or do not pray in the manner in which we ought. Even in refusing this kind of petitions, God shows His mercy to us; "for in His mercy," observes St. Augustine, "He denies those things, which He could not grant but in His wrath." Be grateful to the giver of all good gifts, for the privilege of addressing Him in prayer, and on all occasions take advantage of it.

#### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Benefit of Prayer.—III.**

I. In order to receive the advantages resulting from prayer, we must know how to pray. "Before prayer," says the Wise Man, "prepare thy soul." (Ecclus. xviii. 23.) This preparation consists, 1. In prostrating ourselves with all humility of heart before our God, and in acknowledging our unworthiness to appear in His pure sight, as did the publican, and the centurion in the Gospel. "He hath regard to the prayers of the humble, and hath not despised their petition." (Ps. ci. 18.) And "the prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds." (Ecclus. xxxv. 21.) To pray well, we must, in the second place, be in peace and charity with our neighbors, and pardon all their offences against us. "When you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have any thing against any man." (Mark xi. 25.) 3. We must

feel for the distresses of our fellow-men. "He that stoppeth His ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard." (Prov. xxi. 13.)

II. To pray well, we must observe the conditions which our divine Legislator has imposed. "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret." (Matt. vi. 6.) We must retire from all distracting objects, and shut the doors of our senses. We must pray "in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 23.) We must seriously apply our minds, and our hearts must be in unison with the petition of our lips, else we shall be ranked in the number of those to whom Christ applied the words of the prophet: "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." (Matt. xv. 8.) We must, in fine, entertain a lively faith and confidence; for your Saviour has said "All things, whatsoever you ask, when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." (Mark xi. 24.)

III. There are three grounds upon which this confidence ought to be built. 1. The love which the eternal Father bears us. Christ said, "The Father Himself loveth you." (John xvi. 27.) He who bestowed on you His only begotten Son surely will not refuse to grant your earnest entreaty when you pray for blessings. 2. The second ground is the merits and passion of the Son, who is our Mediator and Advocate, and who assures us, "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that will I do." (John xiv. 13.) 3. The Holy Ghost himself intercedes for us, for St. Paul says, "The Spirit himself asketh for us, with unspeakable groanings." (Rom. viii. 26.)

## OUR LORD'S ASCENSION.

**Christ the King of Glory.**

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet." (Is. lx. 1. and Ps. xlv. 6.)

I. Christ is often called in the inspired pages the King of glory, and on this day He triumphs in the most complete manner, by ascending to the highest heavens in great glory and majesty. He is the source from which glory issues to all the Saints, and whence the several gifts of grace flow upon the faithful. This is especially the day of His triumph; and as earthly princes are accustomed on similar occasions to be more profuse of their gifts, so on this day our triumphant Saviour has bestowed His thousand benefits on mankind. "Ascending on high," says the Apostle, "He led captivity captive, He gave gifts to men." (Eph. iv. 8.)

II. This King of glory will visit you to-day, concealed in the cloud of the Eucharistic species, in order that by bestowing on you the gifts of His grace, He may make you a partaker of His glory. "The glory of Libanus shall come to thee to beautify the place of My sanctuary, and I will glorify the place of My feet." (Ps. lx. 13.) What a favor is this! what may you not hope for from so liberal a guest!

III. How ought you to receive this King of glory? "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter." (Ps. xxiii. 7.) The gates of the soul are its interior powers, by which intercourse is kept up between the soul and exterior objects. They enter through these, and through

the same she passes to them. Lift up, therefore, these gates on high: raise them to such subjects only as are heavenly and eternal, and then the King of glory will enter, and make you a partaker of His majesty and greatness.

## FRIDAY.

### Christ's Ascension.—I.

I. Forty days having elapsed since the resurrection of Christ, during which time He has comforted, instructed, and confirmed His Apostles, He “at length appeared to the eleven as they were at table.” (Mark xvi. 14.) He led them to Mount Olivet, in order that He might commence His triumph, where His passion had begun. Observe with what tenderness and love He does all this; and learn that no other path than the path of suffering leads to glory.

II. Christ said to them, “But stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high.” (Luke xxiv. 49.) If the Redeemer did not wish His Apostles to be too forward in preaching and in doing works for the universal good of mankind, but wished them first to receive power from on high, how proper is it that those who have not been trained up in Christ's school as they were, should first prepare themselves in private, by prayer and the practice of virtue, for the works of the ministry, and for appearing before their neighbors. Every feeling of zeal is not to be trusted. True zeal is the last consequence of the pure love of God, and embraces within itself the emanations of every virtue. Unless your zeal be of this character, it is a dangerous principle of action.

III. When they had arrived at the Mount, Christ lifted up His hands, to signify the fulness of His benediction, and blessed them. Then raising Himself up by His own inherent power, as He did at His resurrection, He ascended by degrees, until a bright cloud snatched Him from their sight. Imagine how the disciples rejoiced in the glory of their Lord, "Who made the clouds His chariot, and who walked on the wings of the wind." (Ps. ciii. 3.) Let it be said of you, that you wish and are determined to ascend with Christ, and that "in your heart you are disposed to ascend by steps." (Ps. lxxxiii. 6.) Make continual progress from one virtue to another, until you reach the mount of perfection.

#### SATURDAY.

#### Christ's Ascension.—II.

I. Christ being out of the sight of His disciples, entered heaven in a triumphant manner. He was accompanied by an infinite multitude of angels, who had come forth to meet Him, and followed by a numerous train of holy Fathers, whom He had redeemed from captivity. "Ascending on high, He led captivity captive." (Eph. iv. 8.) Contemplate and admire His solemn entry into heaven. "God ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with sound of trumpet" (Is. xlv. 6), whilst the celestial spirits invited each other to sing His praises. "Sing to the Lord, sing ye to God, who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east." (Ps. lxvii. 33.)

II. When Christ appeared before the throne of His eternal Father, He presented Him with the holy captives, as spoils taken from the infernal enemy. He then gives Him an account of His mission. "I have glorified Thee

upon earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do, and now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself. I have manifested thy name to men." (John xvii. 4.) The Father welcomes His Son's return to His eternal throne, united to another nature. Then was fulfilled the oracle of David: "The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at My right hand." (Ps. cix. 1.)

III. What joy existed then in Heaven! The holy captives were enraptured with the beatific vision; the angels rejoiced in their company, and were delighted, that the seats which had been vacated by the apostate angels were again filled. All rejoiced in the humanity of the second person of the Trinity, which they saw honored according to its merits. With loud acclaim, they all united and sang, "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." (Apoc. v. 12.) Join your weak praises with theirs, and rejoice that you have so powerful an advocate with the Father. Fix your thoughts, as the Apostles did, where their Head and yours is gone.

#### **SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.**

### **Christ Your Pledge of Glory.**

The Lord will give grace and glory; He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence. (Ps. lxxxiii. 12.)

I. How great is the glory which God communicates to His elect in heaven; how noble is the habitation of the just, and what happy union and harmony exist among them! Our divine Lord promises us that, in due time, we shall enjoy this glory and this exalted society, and,

as a pledge, in the meanwhile gives us His own body and blood. Hence the Church, grateful for the favor, cries out, "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, and a pledge of future glory given to us!"

II. How you would be delighted, were some emperor, who had it in his power to realize his word, to promise you a kingdom, after a certain term of years, and in the meantime were to give you his only son as a pledge! "There is no other nation so great, that hath Gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. iv. 7.) He is now present, to nourish us, in order that he may afterward reward us.

III. This Divine pledge does not only give us an earnest of future glory, but even now, if not prevented, it produces some of these glorious effects in our souls. It brings with it the lustre of habitual grace, than which nothing is more glorious in the sight of God. It renders the soul in some respect impassible, that is, not subject to be moved or disturbed by any worldly adversity. It gives us spiritual agility to obey the commands of God with promptness and fervor. It endows the soul with a certain degree of subtilty, and enables it to pass through every difficulty. Prepare yourself, therefore, to receive it, and bless the infinite mercy of God, "who hath given the pledge of the spirit in our hearts." (2. Cor. i. 22.)

## MONDAY.

### **The Glory of Heaven, in itself.**

I. Speaking of His ascension, Christ told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2.) "Christ's ascension," writes the eloquent St. Leo, "is our promotion, so that where the glory of the Head is gone before.

there is hope that the rest of the body will follow." Give God thanks, for having vouchsafed to call you to His holy service, and contemplate the happiness that will accompany the reward of your fidelity to that service.

II. "Heavenly happiness," as divines observe, from Bœtius, "is a state made perfect by the concurrence of every good." In heaven no evil can assail you, and there will be nothing wanting for which you can possibly wish. "There" (writes St. Gregory), "there will be light without eclipse, joy without sighs, desire without pain, love without sorrow, satiety without cloying, safety without danger, life without death, health without impairment, and so of every other kind of happiness, without the mixture of any evil, from which nothing in this life is free."

III. All this excess of happiness will be eternal and cannot be lost. After uncounted millions of ages, these joys will be equally intense and equally new. "Your joys," says Christ, "no man shall take from you." (John xvi. 22.) Reflect how different are the enjoyments of this life; how full of fear, how mixed with sorrow, how surrounded with anxiety and danger, and finally, how brief. Of earthly joys St. Bernard writes, "While they are possessed, they burthen; while they are loved, they defile; and when they are passed, they torment." Examine your past life and see if this be not an accurate description of all your unlawful enjoyments. If it be, then prefer the joys of heaven to all that this wretched earth can give.



**TUESDAY.****Heavenly Glory.—The Place and Company.**

I. Imagination would torture itself in vain to conceive the glory, the beauty, and the happiness of heaven. "O Israel," exclaimed an enraptured prophet, "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession !" (Baruch iii. 24.) This is that city which St. John describes in his Apocalypse. Its gates are pearl, it is surrounded by walls of jasper, and its foundations are of the most precious stones. The city itself and the streets are of pure gold: "The city needeth not the sun nor the moon to shine in it, for the Lamb is the lamp thereof." (Apoc. xxi. 18.) Cry out with the Psalmist, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lviii. 2.)

II. The company which the blessed will enjoy will be a great source of happiness. "There will be" there, "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and people, and tongues." (Apoc. vii. 9.) There will be an immense number, without any dissension; distinction of degrees without envy; free communication without confusion. There we shall enjoy our friends in perfection. If it be pleasure in this life to converse with learned, amiable, and affectionate companions, how much greater will be the satisfaction to associate with angelic spirits, endowed with every kind of science and virtue, and to live forever in the company of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, and all the other saints of heaven?

III. How vile and contemptible every earthly object

appeared to the Apostles after they had seen their Lord ascend to heaven! So should they appear to you. Reflecting on heaven as the term of your existence, you should bid adieu to this world before it bids adieu to you, and leave nothing undone to secure for yourself a place in those heavenly mansions.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### Heavenly Glory, in Regard to the Soul.

I. The soul will be completely penetrated with God, in a more perfect degree than heated iron is with fire. The memory will be constantly employed in the recollection of most delightful objects. The mind cannot be diverted from the present happiness which it enjoys. "They shall publish the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness, and shall rejoice in Thy justice." (Ps. cxliv 7.)

II. The understanding will be entirely absorbed in contemplating the vision of God. It will instantly behold the divine nature, the trinity of persons, the attributes of God, and other objects which are now mysterious. Then it will see the profound secret of God's decrees, and of His providence over each individual of the human family. "We see now through a glass in an obscure manner," writes St. Paul, "but then face to face." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) Exclaim with enraptured David, "Thy friends, O God, are made exceeding honorable." (Ps. cxxxviii. 17.)

III. The will, in an ineffable manner will adhere to God, and will be, as it were, transformed into Him by love and overflow with joy. The oracle of the Royal Prophet will then be fulfilled, "They shall be inebriated

with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.) Their whole occupation will be to contemplate, love, and enjoy their Creator; to praise, bless, and thank Him; to congratulate Him for His perfections, and to love one another. Who would not consent to suffer not only patiently, but willingly, the afflictions of this life to purchase such a crown of glory? How true is the sentiment of the Apostle of the Gentiles, "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed to us!" (Rom. viii. 18.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### **Heavenly Glory, in Regard to the Body.**

I. The qualities of a glorified body are lucidness, impassibility, agility, and subtilty. The bodies of the glorified just will possess these properties, after their souls have united themselves to them. "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 43.) They will suffer no more. "They shall not hunger nor thirst," says the author of the Apocalypse. (Apoc. vii. 16.) Their agility will be perfect; "The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds." (Wisdom iii. 7.) Like pure spirits, they will be able to penetrate other bodies, and be forever freed from the necessities belonging to a vegetative life, for "they will be as the angels of God." (Matt. xxii. 30.)

II. Each of the senses will enjoy its particular gratification. The sight will be delighted in beholding the glorious bodies of the Saints, particularly of Christ and His blessed mother. "I know," says holy Job, "that my Redeemer liveth, and in my flesh I shall see my God."

(Job xix. 25.) Celestial harmony, such as mortal ear has never listened to, will regale the sense of hearing. The odors of heaven will gratify the smell. "Your Saints, O Lord," exclaims a pious and learned theologian, "will flourish as the lily, and shall be with you as the odor of balm." The taste will be delighted with something far more exquisite than material food. "The Lord will make them drink of the torrent of pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.) The feeling, also, will be completely gratified. "The eye hath not seen," says St. Paul, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

III. How earnestly you ought to labor to attain this great reward! "The kingdom of heaven," says Jesus Christ, "suffereth violence." (Matt. xi. 12.) Offer, then, to your will and passions that necessary violence, for none but the violent can bear away this prize.

## FRIDAY.

### Expectation of the Holy Ghost.—I.

I. After the Apostles had witnessed the ascension of their Lord and Master into heaven, they returned to the city, and assembling in one room, prepared themselves by continual prayer and fervent acts of devotion, for the reception of the Holy Ghost. "All these," says St. Luke, "were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brethren." (Acts. i. 14.) Learn from their conduct, that the dispositions requisite for the receiving of the Holy Ghost, are, 1. Retirement from noise and profane company. 2. Perseverance in prayer. 3. Concord, and union of mind. 4. The company of the Blessed Virgin.

II. If Christ wished His Apostles to prepare themselves in this manner for the reception of the Holy Ghost, how much more necessary is it for those, who have embraced the same vocation, to remain in solitude and retirement, and to prepare themselves, by the continual contemplation of divine things, for their office, until "they be endued with power from on high?" (Luke xxiv. 49.) Imitate the fervor of the Apostles, in preparing yourself for the reception of the divine spirit; pray with the Royal Penitent, "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels," (Ps. l. 12.) and be convinced that no one can be saved, without the influence of the Holy Ghost.

III. The coming of the Divine Spirit was delayed ten days, in order that we might learn to expect with patience, the coming of the Lord, whose presence in our souls, though of short duration, will abundantly recompense every delay. "God by delaying," observes the pious St. Augustine, "increases our desire; by our desiring, He enlarges our hearts, and makes them more capacious."

#### PENTECOST-EVE.

### **Expectation of the Holy Ghost.—II.**

I. Consider the causes, which induced the Divinity to communicate the Holy Ghost to mankind. The first was the infinite goodness of God, "Who so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son." (John iii. 15.) Although the world had treated this only begotten Son so ill, God nevertheless for our advantage was determined to send the Holy Ghost "to teach us all truth." (John xvi. 13.) The second cause was the prayers and

merits of Christ. "I will ask the Father," he says, "and He shall give you another Paraclete." (John xiv. 16.) The third motive was, to perfect the work of our redemption by bestowing on us the gifts of his divine grace, thus enabling us to obtain heaven.

II. Nothing can be more excellent or divine than this gift, for it is nothing less than God Himself. "The charity of God is poured out into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us." (Rom. v. 5.) With Himself, therefore, He gives us all good things, for the Holy Ghost is, as the Church sings, "the bestower of gifts, and the light of our hearts." "He that believeth in me (as the Scripture saith), out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive, who believed in Him." (John vii. 39.)

III. To whom is this divine Spirit given? First, to poor, illiterate fishermen; for God is the Father of the poor, "and His communication is with the simple." (Prov. iii. 32.) Secondly, He is given to all faithful souls, who fervently desire this gift. "I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh," says God, by the prophet Joel. (Joel ii. 28.) Pray therefore, with a fervent desire, and prepare yourself worthily, in order that this divine guest may come and abide with you forever.

## PENTECOST.

### Christ a Fire.

“Behold, the Lord will come with fire.” (Is. lxvi. 15.)

I. The Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles, in the appearance of fire, and thus enlightened them, inflamed them, and transformed them into other men. Reflect how much you stand in need of this heavenly fire, since you are so cold in the service of God, and so covered with the dross of earthly affections. You stand in need of being warmed and purified. “Thy silver is turned into dross—I will turn my hand to thee, and I will clean purge away thy dross, and I will take away all thy tin.” (Is. i. 22, 25.) Endeavor to merit this kindness from your Lord, when He visits you in the sacrament.

II. In the Eucharist, Christ is properly a fire, in regard to the soul, but concealed under a cloud. “The Lord thy God,” says Moses, “is a consuming fire.” (Deut. iv. 24.) It consumes the chaff of earthly affections, purifies the soul from its dross, expels its tepidity and enlightens its darkness. “It purifies the soul,” as St. Gregory says, “from the rust of sin.” The Eucharist is like the hot coal, taken from the altar, that purified the lips of Isaias and endowed Him with the spirit of prophecy. Be convinced that it will produce its effects in you, if you be properly disposed.

III. These dispositions, as has been already remarked, in regard to the Apostles, were retirement, constant prayer, mutual concord, and the company and protection of the blessed Virgin. Imitate them in these dispositions, and take care that after having been warmed by the influence of the Holy Ghost, you do not return to your former state of coldness or tepidity.

#### **PENTECOST MONDAY.**

##### **Descent of the Holy Ghost.—I.**

I. The time which God had ordained having expired, and the Apostles being duly disposed by prayer, the Holy Ghost descended upon them whilst “they were all together in the same place.” (Acts ii. 1.) Learn, hence, to be constant in prayer, to be united with your brethren, and to avoid singularity, if you wish to be visited by the Holy Ghost. Besides, He came suddenly, because His visitations have no fixed time, and therefore ought to be sought for without intermission, and to be waited for with long expectation.

II. “And it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” Ponder the unbounded liberality of the Divine Spirit which left nothing void in His gifts. “The earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the covering waters of the sea.” (Is. xi. 9.) Although they were all filled, yet one received more than another in proportion to his capacity. Hence the blessed Virgin received more than all the rest. Enlarge, therefore, your heart, that you may deserve to receive a large proportion of His divine gifts. “Open thy mouth,” He says by the Royal Psalmist, “and I will fill it.” (Ps. lxxx. 11.)

III. “And there appeared to them cloven tongues as



it were of fire." (Acts ii. 3.) The Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of fiery tongues, "because," as St. Gregory remarks, "those whom He replenishes He renders both fervent and eloquent." Desire Him to produce both effects in you, the first for your own good, and the second for the benefit and edification of others.

#### PENTECOST TUESDAY.

#### Descent of the Holy Ghost.—II.

I. "And they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts ii. 4.) Ponder the greatness of the miracle: poor ignorant fishermen begin to speak the languages of all nations. These languages were not employed upon trifles, but upon the great wonders which Christ had performed for all mankind. In the same manner those who are influenced by the Divine Spirit always speak of divine things, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matt. xii. 34.) See, therefore, whether or not "thy speech doth discover thee" (Matt. xxii. 73), as his did the timid Peter, to be unpracticed "in the things of God."

II. "The multitude came together and was confounded in mind." (Acts ii. 6.) Some believed in the doctrines of the Apostles, whilst others derided them, and said, "These men are full of new wine." There will never be wanting those in the world who will ridicule good actions; but not on that account ought you to desist from pursuing the career of virtue. Beseech our Lord that you may imbibe the same spirit which the Apostle did. "He who is inebriated with the love of God," observes St. Bernard, "knows the relish of Jesus Christ; O how

happy is that man whom He satiates; there is nothing left for him to desire."

III. Consider the effects which the presence of the Holy Ghost produces in the soul. "Be filled," says St. Paul, "with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." (Eph. v. 18.) Excite in yourself those feelings which prompted that line of conduct in those to whom the Apostle wrote.

## WEDNESDAY.

### Gifts of the Holy Ghost.—I.

I. The Divine Spirit, who does not stand in need of our exertions, bestows, nevertheless, His most precious gifts on those who are disposed to receive them. "These gifts are," as the Angel of the Schools teaches, "certain habits which enable a man to follow promptly the instinct of the Holy Ghost, chiefly in relation to noble and heroic actions." These gifts are, according to Isaias, seven: "The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and the spirit of the fear of our Lord." (Is. xi. 2.)

II. These gifts supply us with spiritual armor to protect and aid us in all our infirmities. "The spirit," says St. Paul, "also helpeth our infirmity." (Rom. viii. 26.) "Therefore," writes St. Gregory, "He gives us wisdom to counteract our folly; understanding, our dulness; counsel, our rashness; fortitude, our fear; knowledge, our ignorance; piety, our indevotion; and the fear of God, our pride."

III. How frequently you are subject to all these in-

firmities; how frequently you prefer time to eternity; how sluggish you are in things that relate to the service of God; how fearful you are in the least difficulty; how rash in your determinations; how ignorant of spiritual things; and how indevout; and lastly, and how little you have the fear of God before your eyes. Beseech the Divine Spirit to arm you with this shield of seven-fold strength, and say with the Church, "Come, O Divine Spirit, and send forth the rays of your light."

#### THURSDAY.

#### Gifts of the Holy Ghost.—II.

I. We are not only provided with means of overcoming our infirmities by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but these same gifts provide us with the power of performing all good actions. "Wisdom" helps us to understand the perfections of God, and contemplate them with feeling affection. "Understanding" enables us to penetrate the mysteries of faith, and ponder the secrets that are concealed in them. "Knowledge" gives us the power of contemplating with profit all created things, inasmuch as they come from God and lead to Him.

II. We are helped by "counsel" in our doubts and anxieties; "for the thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain," (Wis. ix. 14); "and the heart fancieth as that of a woman in travail, except it be a vision sent from the Most High." (Ecclus. xxxiv. 6.) And because it is dangerous to trust to ourselves, by the gift of counsel we are induced to suffer ourselves to be governed by others, especially superiors and directors. "Establish within thyself a heart of good counsel," for "the soul of a holy man discovereth true things more

than seven watchmen who sit in a high place to watch." (Ecclus. xvii. 18.)

III. By "fortitude" we are encouraged to undergo every difficulty which stands between us and heaven, and to resist those who wish to make us deviate from virtue, even to death. By "piety" we are taught to act as children towards our superiors, as mothers towards our inferiors, and as brethren towards our equals. Lastly, "The fear of God hateth evil" (Prov. viii. 13), and preserves us from every sin, because "he that feareth God neglecteth nothing." (Ecclus. vii. 19.) Therefore, beg these gifts of God, "Who giveth to all abundantly." (James i. 5.)

## FRIDAY.

### Fruits of the Holy Ghost.

I. The Holy Ghost resembles a large tree, whose top reaches heaven and whose branches extend over the whole world. "The fruit of the Divine Spirit," says the Apostle, "is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity." (Gal. v. 22.) These are the effects which the presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul produces. Admire the goodness and purity of God, who does not disdain to make poor man sensible of His presence by producing in his soul these fruits of holiness.

II. Examine whether you be possessed by the spirit of God, and whether you partake of His fruits; for it is written in the sacred volume: "By their fruits you shall know them." (Matt. vii. 16.) Examine, therefore, how charitable you are; how patient, mild, and modest. If you be destitute of these virtues, you are a stranger to the

Holy Ghost. Learn to appreciate these fruits, and beg God to make you acquainted with them. Remember the admonition of St. Paul, "If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit." (Gal. v. 25.) The Holy Ghost cannot exist in our souls without displaying Himself in our external actions.

III. One of the principal dispositions requisite for our receiving the Holy Ghost, is to cherish a pure intention of serving God in all things, for His own sake, and not from worldly respects; "for," as the Wise Man says, "the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful." (Wis. i. 5.) Endeavor, therefore, to please God in all things, and conform yourself to the discipline requisite for your calling or situation, and do not suffer this conformity to be an effort of the exterior man only, but sanctify it with purity of intention.

#### SATURDAY.

### **The Life which the Holy Ghost Inspired the First Christians to Lead.**

I. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42.) By these three means is our spiritual life preserved and nourished: 1. By hearing or reading the word of God. 2. By frequenting the sacraments, and particularly the sacrament of the altar. 3. By continued prayer. These were the means that the first Christians employed to increase in virtue and perfection, and by these alone can you hope to emulate their example.

H. They lived in common. "All they that believed were together, and had all things common." (Acts ii. 44.)

Their charity and mutual concord were most exemplary. "The multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul." Their evangelical poverty was most extraordinary. "As many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the price of the things they sold and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles." (Acts xxxiv. 35.) "Neither did any one of them say that of the things which he possessed anything was his own, but all things were common to them."

III. "They were continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (as well the Eucharistic bread in communion, as common bread in hospitality), "they took their meat with joy and simplicity of heart, praising God together, and having favor with all the people." (Acts ii. 46.) Alas, how we ought to blush when we compare our manner of living and our general conduct with theirs. Let us imitate their example; for we have the same God to serve that they had, and we hope to enjoy their company in heaven.

#### TRINITY SUNDAY.

### **Christ the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.**

"Lord, if I have found favor in Thy sight, pass not away from Thy servant." (Gen. xviii. 31.)

I. Faith teaches us regarding this adorable mystery, that three persons subsist in one single and indivisible nature, which is the Divine nature; the Father unbegotten, His only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, Who proceeds from them both. This mystery far surpasses human understanding; but mysteries are necessary for religion. If we could comprehend all that regards God, or can be announced of Him, then, either God would be

no greater than ourselves, an imperfect being, or we should be equal to God and perfect. Imagine you see myriads of angels and saints prostrate before the throne of the Divinity, with the most profound reverence and admiration, and hear them continually singing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts." (Is. vi. 3.)

II. The second person of this Divine Trinity will visit you to-day, and with Him the Father and the Holy Ghost, who being of the same nature with the Son, are also in a certain and special manner present in the Eucharist. Examine what entertainment you ought to give these Divine guests. If you think it too much to purify your soul from every sin and every affection of sin, to renounce effectually whatever you know to be displeasing to these Divine guests, you have a very incorrect and a very mean idea of the HOLY TRINITY.

III. With what fervor, humility, and devotion Abraham received the three angels who were an emblem of the Holy Trinity! "He received three, but he adored only one," writes St. Augustine, "saying, Lord if I have found favor in Thy sight, pass not away from Thy servant." He then ran to his herd, took one of his best calves, boiled it, and placed it before them. Act in the same manner, and present your guests with the best gift you can make them. This gift can be no other than your heart warmed and inflamed with the fire of charity. Say with the Church, "Blessed be the holy and undivided Trinity now and for ever."

#### MONDAY.

#### **The First Person of the Trinity.**

I. The eternal Father, as faith teaches us, is the fountain and origin of the other persons of the Trinity.

Knowing Himself from all eternity, in the most perfect manner by intuitive vision, He begets from all eternity a perfect image of Himself, "the image of God and the figure of His substance." (2 Cor. iv. 4, and Heb. i. 3.)<sup>i</sup> This image is the eternal Word, distinct from the Father, but being a perfect image of His substance, is of the same nature. These two perfect beings of the same nature are necessitated to love each other from all eternity; this mutual love which they "breathe" towards each other is the Divine Spirit. Thus the Father communicates to the Son and Holy Ghost His entire nature without division, retaining His own proper personality uncommunicated, while the Holy Ghost proceeds from them both. Admire and adore this most profound mystery, exercise your faith in acts upon it, and acknowledge the weakness of the human intellect, in attempting to comprehend the immensity of the Divinity. Say with the Apostle of nations, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" (Rom. xi. 33.)

II. Although all the external works of God, are common to the three persons of the Trinity; the works of omnipotence, nevertheless, are appropriated to the Father; such as are, creation, preservation and providence. Hence, you should learn how much you ought to love that Being, Who has created you, Who preserves you, and Who for your sake has formed this admirable world. Learn, too, how much reason you have to fear that Being, "that can destroy both body and soul in hell." (Matt. x. 28.)

III. This eternal Father, so great and incomprehensible, has stooped so low beneath Himself, as, for love of His poor insignificant vassals, to condescend to make us His adopted children and heirs of heaven. "The Father



Himself loveth you," says Christ. (John xvi. 27.) Nay more, "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) Remember, then, what great reason you have to love and reverence with your whole heart, so loving a Father. You cannot love and reverence Him, unless you avoid whatever is displeasing to Him, and do that which is agreeable to Him, that is, unless you "avoid evil and do good."

## TUESDAY.

### **The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.**

I. The second person of the Trinity existed from all eternity, without any relation to time, equal to the Father and consubstantial with Him. He is coeternal with the Father, "the image of God and the figure of His substance." He is properly the Word (or idea) of the Divine intellect, expressing in Himself the substance of the Divine nature. This Word became vocal by the mystery of the Incarnation, and declared to mankind the secrets of His Father. "Who shall declare His generation," exclaims the prophet. (Is. liii. 8.) Neither the angels themselves, nor all the eloquence of earth-born men can explain His mysterious birth. If they could, this Divine Word would present no object for our faith, because our understandings, which would then be capable of comprehending His Divine nature, must either be infinite, or this Divine Word must be a limited and an imperfect being. Our understandings are not infinite, and He is not an imperfect being; therefore, we cannot comprehend, by any faculty of which we are possessed, this mysterious generation. It is sufficient for us, that we adore Him with an unshaken faith, and rejoice in His glory, which is

substantially equal to the glory of His Father. Learn to detest that pride, which prompts ignorant man to ascend to heaven, and to scan the power and works of the Divinity.

II. This only begotten Son of God loved the world to such a degree, that He surrendered His life to redeem it. "For us men," says the Church in the Nicene Creed, "and for our salvation, He descended from heaven, and was made man." "God became man," writes St. Augustine, that we might "become God," and the eloquent St. Leo remarks, "Christ was made the Son of Man, that we might be made the sons of God." O ineffable and incomprehensible mystery!

III. How are you to requite so much love? You are certainly bound to reverence His Divine person with the most tender devotion and respect. Love that sacred humanity, which the Son of God assumed, and which was nailed to the cross for your sake. Say with the devout St. Bernard, "The more vile this Son of God has become for my sake, by so much the more is He dear to me." Do not alienate His affections by sinning against Him. Though Jesus Christ be infinitely good and infinitely merciful, He is still infinitely just.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.**

I. The Holy Ghost as the third person of the Holy Trinity proceeds from the Father and the Son, but is coeternal and consubstantial with them both, of equal power and wisdom and majesty. For in the language of the Church, "we adore a distinction of persons and unity in the essence and an equality in the majesty."

Honor and reverence this Divine person, and join your voice with that of the angels and saints, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts."

II. The Holy Ghost appeared over Christ in the form of a dove, 1. to teach us His love in regard to those whom Christ came to redeem, for the dove is an emblem of social love, and, 2. to inspire us with mildness and simplicity of life and action. To Him likewise are attributed the works of justification, the distribution of graces and the benefits of inspiration. "The Spirit breatheth where He will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, nor whither He goeth." (John iii. 8.) Pray with earnestness and fervor for this Divine grace, for, without it, it is impossible to perform a supernatural meritorious act.

III. The Holy Ghost not only communicates His grace to faithful Christians, but in a special manner communicates Himself, as divines teach, to the just. Hence St. Paul writes to his Corinthian converts, "Know ye not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Take care, then, that you never profane His temple. Beg of Him, by continued prayer, that He would "wash away what is unclean in you, water what is dry, heal what is wounded, bend what is stubborn, warm what is cold, and correct all your deviations."

## CORPUS CHRISTI.

### The Institutor of the Holy Eucharist.

"He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord, He hath given food to them that fear Him." (Ps. cx, 4.)

I. Under what obligations you are to your Saviour for

His institution of so admirable and beneficial a mystery! From this sacrament, as from a fountain, every kind of good flows. It is the proper sacrifice for our sins, it is the spiritual food of our souls, a lively memorial of Christ's passion and death, and the spring and fountain of all grace and virtue. "His blessing hath overflowed like a river." (Ecclus. xxxix. 27.)

II. The Divine Institutor, who has shown Himself wonderful in all His works, has, in this single action, employed all the resources of His power and wisdom. For in the Eucharist He displays His infinite wisdom in inventing such admirable food; His power is manifested in the transubstantiation of the bread and wine; His goodness in communicating Himself to us, and His liberality in giving Himself entirely to each one who receives Him. His patience, in a particular manner, manifests itself by His suffering Himself to be handled by the wicked, and insulted by those who receive Him unworthily. "He hath made a remembrance of His marvellous works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord, He hath given food to them that fear Him."

III. In consequence of the greatness of the favors received in the Eucharist, the Church at this time celebrates the memory of this mystery with pomp and ceremony. If the Ark of the Covenant was formerly carried with such great solemnity, how much more honor does the holy Eucharist deserve. Go forth, therefore, to meet your concealed God, your soul adorned with every virtue, praise, honor, and thank Him for His mercies. At least "do what you are able, because He is above all praise, and you cannot praise Him sufficiently."

## FRIDAY.

**The Holy Eucharist compared to Manna.—I.**

Nothing in the ancient law or history of the Jewish nation was more wonderful than the manna, which, during forty years together, fell from heaven to feed the people as they journeyed through the desert. Hence David said of it, "He has made a remembrance of His marvellous works, He hath given food to them that fear Him." (Ps. cx. 4.) There were twelve admirable properties in the manna, but they exist in a more eminent degree in the holy Eucharist.

I. The manna was bread, not produced from grain that had been sown in the earth, that had been tilled, but came down from heaven; so it is with the holy Eucharist, which "is the bread that came down from heaven." (John vi. 59.) And the Sacred Body of Christ which proceeded not from human generation, but from the pure Virgin, and by the Divine influence of the Holy Ghost.

II. The manna was made only by angels, hence it was called "the bread of angels." (Ps. lxxvii. 25.) And the Eucharist is consecrated only by priests, who are called "the angels of the Lord of Hosts." (Malach. ii. 7.)

III. The manna contained in itself every kind of delight: so does the Eucharist in a more eminent degree, "surpassing," as St. Cyprian observes, "all delicacies prepared for the taste; and all the dainties of sweet meats."

IV. The manna contained such a variety of tastes in itself that it had a different relish for every one that desired it, "serving every man's will, it was turned to what every man liked." (Wisdom xvi. 21.) In like manner the Eucharist supplies every one who approaches it with

proper dispositions, with every virtue that can be desired. To some it is a source of humility, whilst others receive from it the virtue of chastity.

V. The sweetness of the manna was concealed from the wicked, and only enjoyed by the just, hence the former complained, "our soul now loatheth this very light food." (Numb. xxi. 5.) So the Eucharist to sinners can hardly be distinguished from ordinary food, and hence it is called a hidden manna.

VI. Though the manna was divided into many parts, each part retained the virtue and strength of the whole; so, although the Eucharist be broken into a thousand pieces, "as much remains in each separate part as was contained before in the whole."

#### SATURDAY.

#### **The Holy Eucharist compared to Manna.—II.**

VII. The manna was given in equal measure to every one. "Neither had he more that had gathered more, nor did he find less that had provided less." (Exod. xvi. 18.) So in the Eucharist, "one receives, a thousand receive, but one receives as much as all."

VIII. The manna was to be gathered early before sunrise, or it melted away, although when it had been collected it withstood even fire. In order "that it might be known," says the Wise Man, "that we ought to prevent the sun to bless Thee, O Lord." (Wis. xvi. 28.) In the same manner the Eucharist does not impart its sweet advantages to the indolent and the slothful, but only to the fervent. "They that in the morning early watch for Me shall find Me." (Prov. viii. 17.)

IX. The manna in equal proportion served for children as well as men, for the young as well as the old; in the

same manner the Eucharist produces different effects, according to the capacity of those who receive it, and the dispositions of those who approach it.

X. When the manna was kept even until the next day, from a spirit of covetousness, it became corrupted; but when laid up by the command of God in a vessel of gold, it remained uncorrupted for many generations. In the same manner the Eucharist, when it is received unworthily, tends to increase the corruption of the criminal soul, for "they eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the body of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 29.) But when it is received in the golden vessel of a pure and innocent heart it becomes the seed of eternal life.

XI. For forty years, whilst the children of Israel were journeying to the land of promise, the manna never failed; so is the Eucharist the constant and never-failing food of Christians during their pilgrimage through this vale of tears. "Behold I am with you," says Jesus Christ, "even to the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

XII. The manna fell daily without intermission, except on the Sabbath day, on which day the Israelites lived on what they had collected the day before; so is the Eucharist our daily food, and will not cease to be so until the Sabbath of eternal repose arrive, when we shall live forever on the fruits which we have collected during this life.

## SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

### **The Eucharist a Banquet.—I.**

"Come eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." (Prov. ix. 5.)

I. "A certain man made a great supper." (Luke xiv.

16.) This man is Christ, and the Eucharist is the great supper, to which all mankind are invited. "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy laden," says Christ, "and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.) Never since the commencement of the world was there a feast so sumptuous and magnificent as that which Christ has prepared for His friends. Prepare, therefore, your soul to be present at this banquet, and ponder the admirable effects which you have reason to expect from it.

II. This banquet is not prepared for one individual only, but for all nations. "The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine." (Is. xxv. 6.) This feast will continue to the end of time; it is not like the feast of King Assuerus, which lasted only "for a hundred and fourscore days." (Esth. i. 4.) This banquet has continued nearly nineteen hundred years, and it will continue until the Church militant be transferred to heaven; "even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20). It contains every variety of spiritual taste, possessing, as the wise man says, "all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste." (Wis. xvi. 20.) The feast, besides, is most wholesome, for "he that eateth this bread shall live forever." (John vi. 59.)

III. This feast is most delicious; "he fed them with the fat of wheat and filled them with honey out of the rock, and the rock was Christ." (Ps. lxxx. 17, and 1 Cor. x. 4.) The flesh and blood of the Son of God is the food which the Christian receives. Approach, therefore, this sacred table with every sentiment of piety and devotion, and say with the Church, "O sacred feast, in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion renewed, our mind filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given us."



**MONDAY.****The Eucharist a Banquet.—II.**

I. Everything that accompanies this Divine feast tends to increase its magnificence. The dignity of the guests, the quality and number of waiters, and the sumptuousness of the service, recommend an earthly festivity. In this feast the guests are the three Divine Persons of the Trinity. What can be more dignified or sublime? "If any man shall hear My voice," says the Redeemer by the mouth of His Apostle, "and open to Me the gate I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Apoc. iii. 20.) And again, "If any one love Me My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make an abode with him." (John xiv. 23.)

II. The waiters are angels, the most excellent of all creatures by nature. "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten times a hundred thousand stood before Him." (Dan. vii. 10.) They assist their Lord, as the holy Fathers teach, during the time of Divine service, and remain with you as long as Christ is personally present. Learn with what reverence you ought to be present during the solemn hour of sacrifice, and during the time of holy Communion.

III. Though the celebration of the sacrifice of Mass may appear externally an ordinary ceremony, yet in reality it surpasses all the powers of nature. The Food of Life is handed to you under the appearances of bread, which appearances are miraculously preserved without their proper substance. There is no miracle so great as this in nature. Learn from all these considerations how well adorned with every virtue your soul ought to be

when you approach the holy table. "Be ye clean," exclaims the prophet, "that carry the vessels of the Lord." (Is. lii. 11.) How much greater reason have you to purify yourself, since you carry in your breast our Lord Himself!

## TUESDAY.

### **The Eucharist Compared to the Tree of Life.—I.**

I. The tree of life, that grew in Paradise, restored the decaying forces of nature and preserved man, who was then immortal, in continual repair. In his Apocalypse, St. John says, that "the tree of life bore twelve fruits." (Apoc. xxii. 2.) The Eucharist is the bread of life, so called by Christ Himself, because by the grace which it gives, it renders us immortal; and because it yields twelve kinds of fruit, which are sovereign remedies against every infirmity to which man's nature is subject by sin.

II. Our first misery arises from the assaults of the devil, who, "as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. v. 8.) The holy Eucharist arms us against this misery by supplying us with strength to resist the devil and drive him away. To compare great things with small, it is like the heart of the fish of Tobias; which when burnt, "the smoke thereof driveth away all kinds of devils." (Tob. vi. 8.) The second evil to which man is subject, is the rebellion of concupiscence, of which the Apostle says, "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind." (Rom. vii. 23.) This law is the concupiscence of sin, in our members, such as the desire of wealth, the inclination to calumniate, and the love of pleasure. The heat of this concupiscence is allayed by the holy Eucharist.

Hence it is compared to the manna, which "lay like unto the hoar-frost on the ground." (Ex. xvi. 14.) The same Lord, Who is concealed in the Eucharist, says by His prophet, "I will be as the dew; Israel shall spring as the lily." (Osee xiv. 6.)

III. The third misery to which we are subject, is the corruption of the heart, for "there is no just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." (Eccles. vii. 21.) This corruption the Eucharist corrects and purifies, as the burning coal taken from the altar, purified the lips of Isaías. The fourth misery is the anger of the Creator against His sinful creatures. The Eucharistic sacrifice appeases His indignation and resembles the gift, of which the Wise Man speaks. "A gift in the bosom quencheth anger." (Prov. xxi. 14.) There is no gift more acceptable to God, than His only Son, Who is received into our bosoms, after having been offered to His eternal Father, in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Eucharist Compared to the Tree of Life.—II.**

I. The fifth misery, which is the consequence of original sin, is ignorance. Before the completion of creation, "darkness was on the face of the deep." (Gen. i. 2.) So does darkness overspread the heart of man, when it is not enlightened by the grace of God. Hence the prophet observes, "The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable, who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) The Eucharist expels this darkness, and enlightens the understanding; as the honey opened the eyes of Jonathan. "You have seen yourselves," he said, "that my eyes are enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey." (1

Kings, xiv. 29.) The sixth evil consequence of original sin, is a want of the love of God and our neighbor; "for where iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold." (Matt. xxiv. 12.) Against this evil a remedy is provided in the holy Eucharist, which inflames the heart with Divine love, and affords strong motives for the love of our neighbor.

II. Another consequence of original sin is an indisposition in the spiritual appetite, and a want of relish for spiritual things, for "the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The man who continually seeks the pleasures and happiness of this life alone, will soon lose every relish for the things of God. The holy Eucharist remedies this evil and enables the devout Christian to taste and see, "that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. xxxiii. 9.) Learn, then, to appreciate the advantages, which result from a worthy communion.

III. The eighth bad consequence of original sin is a want of fervor in the prosecution of good works. We often begin well, but our resolution soon fails. "This man began to build, but was not able to finish it." (Luke xiv. 30.) The holy Eucharist strengthens us in our resolutions; it is like the bread, which the angel brought to Elias, "who walked in the strength of that bread, forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God, Horeb." (3 Kings, xix. 8.) Pray to God, that you may partake of these precious fruits, and particularly, that you may persevere in good to the end. "Of all virtues," says St. Bernard, "perseverance alone is crowned."

**THURSDAY.****The Eucharist Compared to the Tree of Life.—III.**

I. In consequence of the sin of our first parents, man was rendered subject to eternal death. "We were by nature," says St. Paul, "the children of wrath." (Ephes. ii. 3.) From this penalty the Eucharist delivers us, because it gives eternal life. "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John vi. 32.) The tenth misery to which we are subject, is a continual decay in good, and a strong inclination to evil. "For the imagination and thoughts of man's heart, are prone to evil from his youth." (Gen. vi. 21.) This inclination to evil is subdued by the holy Eucharist, and this spiritual decay remedied. The virtuous Christian, then, grows in spiritual life, and advances in the career of perfection. For "he that abideth in Me," says Christ, "and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." (John xv. 5.)

II. The eleventh misery of man in this vale of tears is an irksomeness and tediousness in our place of banishment. "Woe is me," said royal David, "that my sojourning is prolonged." (Ps. cxix. 5.) The Eucharist alleviates this tediousness, it is our viaticum, as the manna was to the Israelites, whilst we journey through the desert of this world, and until we arrive at the land of promise, the kingdom of everlasting glory.

III. The twelfth evil is a continual decay, and tendency to dissolution in our bodies. "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii. 19.) Thus, according to the course of nature, this body of ours would perish forever; but in consequence of their corporal participation with Christ, as St. Thomas teaches, the saints

will rise again in their bodies, which will be more glorious than the sun. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 55.)

Admire the efficacy and virtue of these fruits of the holy Eucharist, and give God thanks for the powerful remedies, which they afford against all your maladies. Say with the prophet, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, Who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. cii. 2.)

#### FRIDAY.

### **To Receive the Holy Eucharist by Faith and Purity.**

I. How necessary it is to prepare beforehand for the worthy receiving of holy communion; lest by approaching with a conscience loaded with mortal guilt, you convert the food of life into poison, or by communicating with indevotion and tepidity, you receive but little grace! Fearful of these evils, St. Paul exclaims to all Christendom, "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread." (1 Cor. xi. 28.) He that presumes to come to the marriage feast without the wedding garment, will be cast into utter darkness. (Matt. xxii.) Admit, then, the necessity of proper preparation for so sacred and important a duty.

II. The first condition requisite for a worthy communion is a lively faith. Faith is the ground-work and foundation of every virtue, and of every meritorious action. Hence the Apostle says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith." (Heb. x. 22.) Excite, therefore, a lively faith in your soul, as often as you approach this holy mystery; reject every temptation arising

from the dictates of the senses, against a firm belief in the mystery; tell them that the veracity of God Himself, Whose revelations are not to be judged at the tribunal of man's weak senses and limited understanding, is pledged for its truth.

III. The second preparation requisite for a worthy communion is purity of mind and conscience. In proportion to the perfection of this purity, will you receive the benefits of the sacrament. Hence, Isaias exclaims, "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord." (Is. lii. 11.) The Church recommends the same purity to us; hence she has ordained that the Eucharist shall be consecrated on clean corporals. These corporals, says the Angelical Doctor, are first washed, then wrung, and lastly dried: so he who approaches the sacrament, must first wash his sins by the tears of penance; he must then drain from his soul every affection to sin that may linger in it, by mortification, and thirdly, the fire of charity must expel from it every inclination to relapse. Examine if these be your dispositions when you approach the holy table.

#### SATURDAY.

#### To Receive the Holy Eucharist by Desires and Prayers.

I. To a lively faith and purity of mind and conscience must be joined an ardent desire and hunger for this heavenly banquet. To such as these only does our Lord address the invitation: "Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits." (Ecclus. xxiv. 26.) And the Psalmist tells us, "He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good

things." (Ps. cvi. 9.) Excite in your soul, therefore, this hunger and thirst, as often as you approach this holy table. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord. (Ps. lxxx. 11.)

II. To this desire must be added earnest prayer, for God bestows His blessings on those who ask them. Therefore King David said; "They asked and the quail came, and He filled them with the bread of heaven." (Ps. civ. 40.) If, therefore, you wish to be satisfied with this heavenly food, you must surrender your soul to meditation and prayer. "I sat down under His shadow, whom I desired," says the spouse in the canticles. (Cant. ii. 3.) "I sat," that is, in holy meditation and contemplation; and having experienced their sweetness, the spouse immediately adds, "and His fruit was sweet to my palate."

III. You must not wonder, if after diligent preparation on your part, you do not immediately discover the sweetness of this heavenly food. As a skilful physician sometimes prescribes medicine, which is disagreeable to the palate, and sometimes that which is agreeable, so does God temper the sweetness of this Divine food, in such a manner, that some feed on it with sensible devotion, whilst others only relish it by the knowledge and satisfaction, which they receive of its great benefits. Submit yourself, therefore, to this heavenly Physician, and beg of Him to give you that relish of this holy bread, which He knows to be most for your benefit.



**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.****Christ a Shepherd, Seeking one of His Strayed Sheep. (Luke xv. 4.)**

“I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost, seek Thy servant.”  
(Ps. cxviii. 176.)

I. The Shepherd in the gospel of to-day, having lost one of His hundred sheep, went to seek it. This Shepherd is Christ. Remark His great anxiety and care for His wandering sheep. He leaves His ninety-nine others, that is, the innumerable angels in heaven, to go in quest of the one that was lost. He stood not in need of it, in any possible point of view; yet He spares neither pain nor labor, in endeavoring to find it. When He has found it, He neither chastises nor reproaches it, but laying it upon His shoulders, brings it home again to the fold. “What is man,” O God, “that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?” (Job vii. 17.)

II. Your soul is in a particular manner, this strayed sheep. You have hitherto wandered up and down “through the ways of your own inventions,” deviating from the boundaries of that virtue and perfection, to which God has called you. You have refused to devote to Him your external and internal actions. You take no longer delight in the rich pastures, in which God wishes you to dwell, but you have sought for satisfaction and pleasure in the things of the world. “All we, like sheep, have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way.” (Is. liii. 6.)

III. This loving Shepherd will visit you to-day, in order to bring you back again to the right way. Beg

pardon for all the errors of your understanding and your heart; and for your frequent neglect of God's holy inspirations. Promise Him, that for the future, you will give Him all your actions, both internal and external, and say with the Psalmist, "I have gone astray, like a sheep that is lost, seek Thy servant, because I have not forgotten Thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii. 176.)

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### **Meditations on the Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ from His Baptism to His Passion.**

The life, which the Redeemer led, and the doctrine which He taught, afford plentiful matter for meditation. But since we cannot examine every passage relating to these, we will select the chief, and shall not so much follow the order of the history, as the connection and similitude of actions and doctrine. Most ascetic writers have followed this plan.

#### **MONDAY.**

#### **Preaching of John the Baptist.—I.**

I. "In those days, came John the Baptist, preaching in the desert of Judea." (Matt. iii. 1.) The preaching of the Baptist preceded that of Jesus Christ, as the dawn of the morning precedes the rising sun. Of him it is said, "Behold I send my angel before Thy face, who shall prepare the way before Thee." (Mark i. 3; Mal. iii. 1.) John was, therefore, an angel both as to his office and the innocence of his life. Such ought to be all priests, who are frequently in the Scriptures called angels. Such ought to be the life of every faithful

Christian; for, all Christians, St. Peter writes: "you are a royal priesthood." (1 Pet. 29.)

II. Consider more in particular the admirable virtues of this holy precursor. His austerity of life was eminently great, for the Evangelist remarked of him, "John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey." (Matt. iii. 4.) His lodging, without doubt, was consistent with his apparel. His bed must have been the bare ground, and a cave must have been his only defence against the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Reflect how far inferior you are to this great preacher; you who are not content with those conveniences which your condition and state of life afford you.

III. This austerity of life was accompanied with the continued contemplation of heavenly things, in which he spent his life until the thirtieth year of his age. Admire his constancy in so long a warfare; for during the whole of that time he must have had frequent conflicts with the enemy of man's salvation. Ponder his incomparable innocence of life; for he did not commit the least venial sin, as most divines are of opinion. And at the same time that you admire, imitate, as nearly as possible, this excellent model of all virtue.

## TUESDAY.

### **Preaching of John the Baptist.—II.**

I. Penance was the constant subject of the Baptist's preaching and discourses. "Do penance," he cried out, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) He exhorts his auditory to penance by proposing to them the hopes of the kingdom of heaven, and then the fear of

God's severer judgments. He represents Him as coming with the fan in His hand, to separate the chaff from the wheat. Reflect how much you stand in need of this penance, and examine whether you be wheat or chaff. If you find yourself to be the former, take care you do not degenerate, and remember the advice of St. Paul: "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed, lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) If you find yourself to be the latter, endeavor, by the Divine assistance, to reform your conduct, and commence a serious conversion. If you do not, you will be cast into the "unquenchable fire." (Mark ix. 42.)

II. "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire." It is not sufficient to produce any kind of fruit; the fruit must be solidly good. Examine your works, whether they be good, solid, and perfect, or not rather counterfeit and fair in appearance only, or at least imperfect and not of full growth and maturity. Tremble at the complaint which God utters by the mouth of Isaias, "I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes." (Is. v. 4.) Tremble, too, at His terrible sentence, "Cut it down; why doth it take up the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7.)

III. The Baptist did not commence his preaching until he had arrived at a mature age and prepared himself by prayer and mortification for his holy office. Then, impelled by the Divine Spirit, by whose inspiration he had retired into solitude, He enters upon his office with invincible courage. The Holy Ghost is accustomed to employ those whom He has rendered perfect, in procuring the perfection of others. Let your desert be that private life or station in which God has placed you, and endeavor to sanctify it by prayer, retirement, and mortification. Saints have been found in every station and

profession of life, but no one was ever a saint or ever will be, who was not addicted to prayer, retirement, and mortification.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **The Jews' Message to St. John the Baptist.—I.**

I. Moved by the sanctity of the Baptist, a great number of Jews resorted to him, so that not only the common people, but also the chief magistrates, began to doubt whether or not he were the Christ. "Therefore the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and levites to him to ask him, Who art thou?" (John i. 19.) Reflect what influence innocence of life possesses over the minds of men, and how truly St. Bernard remarks, that "the voice of works is louder than that of words."

II. Upon this occasion St. John exercised many acts of humility. He was held in such esteem by the Jews as to be taken for the Messiah, but he did not therefore pride himself upon his reputation, as worldly people are accustomed to do in similar circumstances. "He confessed and did not deny and he confessed, I am not the Christ." The first degree of humility consists in disowning what does not belong to a person, and of bestowing it where it is due. Examine whether you do not often act otherwise by raising yourself above your proper level, and by concealing what you are in reality.

III. The Jews afterwards inquired whether he were not Elias or some one of the prophets, and he answered, *No*. He might have suffered himself to be called Elias in spirit, and a prophet, and more than a prophet in fact, as he was styled by the angel, and by Christ Himself. But he who is truly humble not only refuses the praise to which he is not entitled, but, as far as truth will per-

mit, diminishes that which is his most just due. He never commends himself, but rather, as St. Bernard remarks; "as much as he can, prevents his good qualities from being known." Blush at your folly in seeking the applause of men, and in attempting to magnify your own merits and pretensions.

#### THURSDAY.

### The Jews' Message to St. John the Baptist.—II.

I. The Jews still urging St. John to give some account of himself, he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." (John i. 23.) He makes no boast of his parentage or priesthood, as worldly men are accustomed to do. He calls himself *a voice*, expressive of his office of precursor, and acknowledges that whatever he was or whatever he possessed belonged to another, to God, whose instrument he was. This is an exercise of a third degree of humility. It consists in this, that when we are forced to disclose something good belonging to ourselves, we feel and acknowledge that it is purely a gift of God, and not our own.

II. "And they asked him and said to him, Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ?" The Jews accuse him of presumption in assuming, by his private authority, the office of baptizing. St. John, however, did not attempt his own justification, nor make any apology, but, leaving the matter to the providence of God, he continues to speak to his own disadvantage. "I baptize," he said, "in water: but there hath stood One in the midst of you, whom you know not, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." It is an exercise of a fourth degree of humility, to be backward in ex-

cusing one's self. Would to God that we all practiced this virtue as well as the Baptist did!

III. The Jews sent their message to the precursor, instead of sending it to Christ, by whom they might have been much better informed. So we often seek comfort from creatures rather than from the Creator. Observe, moreover, the blindness of these Jews, who although they heard that Christ was among them, neglected, notwithstanding, to inquire for Him. For your part, use all diligence in discovering the will of God in your regard; and when you have found it be faithful in putting it into execution.

#### FRIDAY.

#### Christ's Baptism.—I.

I. The first act of Christ's public life was to present Himself to be baptized by His precursor, to teach us that those who are employed in the work of God should carry with them a pure and uncorrupted heart. He therefore takes leave of His divine Mother, who, although she grieved at the absence of such a Son, rejoiced that the redemption of Israel was at hand. He takes a long journey to the Baptist. The Lord goes to the servant to be baptized by him as a common sinner, among publicans and soldiers and the lowest order of the vulgar. Admire the humility of the Son of God, and convince yourself that humility is the best preparation for great works. "That which shall be saved of the house of Judah and which is left, shall take root downward, and shall bear fruit upward." (Is. xxxvii. 31.)

II. John by divine revelation knew our Lord at His approach, and modestly refused to baptize Him. "I

ought to be baptized by Thee," he says, "and comest Thou to me?" (Matt. iii. 14.) Think what affections of joy, reverence, and submission the holy Baptist experienced in his heart, when he saw the Creator humbling Himself so low as to receive baptism from His creature. Excite the same affections when He visits you in sacrament.

III. Christ answers, "Suffer it now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." Ponder the import of the words "all justice," and learn to omit nothing in the way of virtue that may be beneficial to yourself or give edification to your neighbor. Examine yourself whether or not you do so, whether you put in practice the lessons and advice which you give to others; for, as St. Ambrose observes, "that pastor fulfils justice who makes good by deeds what he teaches by words."

## SATURDAY.

### Christ's Baptism.—II.

I. "Jesus being baptized and praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape as a dove upon Him." (Luke iii. 21.) God always exalts the humble. Christ is therefore honored here (1.) by the opening of the heavens, to show mankind that by His means the gates of heaven were to be thrown open to them. (2.) By the descent of the Holy Ghost, to express the fulness of grace and heavenly gifts which He possessed, and which were to be imparted to mankind. (3.) He is proclaimed the Son of God by nature, and deserving of every homage from His creatures.

II. The Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove, to show mankind what kind of a life those ought to lead who are baptized. "In order that every one may under-



stand," writes St. Augustine, "that if he be possessed of the simple spirit" of truth and sincerity, "he must be like a dove, must be at peace with his brethren, which is represented by the affectionate endearments of doves, and lastly that he must hurt no one, as doves hurt no living creature."

III. The divine effects of baptism are expressed in the baptism of Christ. Baptism opens the gates of heaven, it reveals the divine mysteries to us, it remits all sin, it gives us the grace of the Holy Ghost, and it renders us the adopted children of God. Frequently renew your baptismal engagements; give God thanks for the benefits received by means of this sacrament; and since you are now an adopted son of God, raise your thoughts and affections to your heavenly habitation, whose gates are now opened for you, and say with the Psalmist, "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest." (Ps. liv. 7.)

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

##### Christ the Director of Your Actions.

"Conduct me, O Lord; direct me in Thy sight." (Ps. v. 9.)

I. We read in the Gospel of this present Sunday that the disciples, who were fishing, told Christ, "Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing." (Luke v. 5.) We all live in moral darkness and ignorance, without knowing what we do, and this will prove hurtful to us unless we be directed by Divine light. We may justly say with King Josaphat, "But as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee." (2 Par. xx. 12.) Neither does God, on the other hand, re-

fuse the office of being our Director; for it is recorded of Joseph in Egypt, "The Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper." (Gen. xxxix. 23.)

II. Christ, as we read in the Gospel, directed His Apostles, who were fishing, and they immediately caught a great quantity of fish. He will visit your soul to-day, to direct your spiritual concerns, so that you have great reason to hope for much spiritual profit if you will follow His directions and obey His divine inspirations.

III. You must prepare your heart to receive your heavenly director in a proper manner. You must first divest it of all sinful affections; and therefore St. Peter says in the Gospel, "Depart from me, O Lord; for I am a sinful man," knowing that Christ could have no connection with sin. You must, in the second place, earnestly entreat Him to do you the favor of remitting your sins, and directing you in the way of virtue; for of King Ozias it is written, "And when he sought the Lord, he directed him in all things." (2 Paralip. xxvi. 5.) Wherefore say with the Psalmist, "Look upon Thy servants, and upon their works: and direct their children; and let the brightness of the Lord our God be upon us; and direct Thou the works of our hands over us; yea, the work of our hands do Thou direct." (Ps. lxxxix. 16, 17.)

## MONDAY.

### Christ retiring into the Desert.

(Mat. iv.; Mark, i.; Luke, iv.)

I. Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan "and was led by the Spirit into the desert." (Matt. iv. 1.) Learn from this fact that the soul which

is once filled with the Holy Ghost is always led to prayer, contemplation, and solitude. Besides, our Lord retired to avoid the applause of the people, which was the natural consequence of the wonderful signs which had been seen at His baptism. Before He commenced His preaching, He retired forty days from the conversation and ways of men, to teach you to love solitude and retirement, and when you have it in your power to separate yourself from your ordinary occupations, and, for a short time at least, to enter into spiritual retreat, to converse with God on the important affair of salvation.

II. Christ is said after His baptism to have followed the conduct of the Holy Ghost, intimating that all who are baptized ought to follow the direction of the Divine Spirit and not their own judgments. Examine what spirit guides you in your actions, whether it be the spirit of perfection or of vanity. If you be a child of God, you must be led in everything by the Divine Spirit; for according to the Apostle, "whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.)

III. St. Mark says of Christ, "And He was with beasts." (Mark i. 13.) Admire the humility of the Son of God, who, although He was creator of all things, did not disdain for forty days to live among brute beasts. He might truly have said with Job, "I was the brother of dragons, and companion of ostriches." (Job xxx. 29.) Be confounded at your want of virtue, when you cannot live contentedly except with companions of your own choice and humor. Learn to bear patiently with the crosses arising from troublesome associates; for, as the great St. Gregory says, "No one is perfect who is impatient among bad or troublesome neighbors."

## TUESDAY.

## Christ's Fasting.

(Matt. iv.; Luke iv.)

I. "And when He had passed forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards hungry." (Matt. iv. 2.) Christ joins fasting and mortification to His prayer in the desert, for prayers and mortification are two sisters that wish never to be separated. Prayer excites mortification, and mortification refines prayer as fire refines gold. In this manner, Christ's prayer "ascended from the desert, like a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense." (Cant. iii. 6.) Endeavor to pray in such a manner that your prayers may ascend in so grateful a manner to the throne of God. Remember that "prayer is good with fasting and alms." (Tob. xii. 8.)

II. Our Lord observed this rigorous fast, at the commencement of His preaching, to teach His followers that the first act of a spiritual life, much more of an apostolic life, is to tame and subdue the sensual appetites. Hence the ancient Fathers ordained, as Cassian informs us, that the taming of these appetites should be the first lesson which was to be given, for he who cannot master the palpable and grosser vices will not be able to subdue those which are of a more subtle and secret nature. Examine your conscience on this point, and ponder the expressions of the Wise Man: "He that loveth good cheer shall be in want; he that loveth wine and fat things shall not be rich." (Prov. xxi. 27.) The man who does not subdue his sensuality will always be spiritually poor.

III. The fruits of fasting are so numerous and so beneficial, that you ought to practice it as far as your health will permit. (1) It tames the rebellions of the flesh; (2) It purifies the mind and renders it capable of heavenly contemplation; (3) It appeases God's wrath and indignation; (4) It atones for sin; (5) It is meritorious of eternal life; (6) It obtains for us temporal blessings; (7) It is the food and nourishment of all virtues. Embrace a practice which is attended with so many benefits.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### Christ's Temptation.

I. After Christ had fasted forty days in the desert, He suffered Himself to be tempted by the Devil to gluttony, vainglory, ambition, and avarice. He suffered this in order that He might learn by His own experience "to have compassion on our infirmities." (Heb. iv. 15.) "For in that wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succor those also who are tempted." (Heb. ii. 15.) He suffered these temptations, besides, that, like a good commander, He might instruct us how to fight and conquer in this spiritual warfare. Thank Him for giving you so perfect an example of humility, and say with the Prophet, "Blessed be the Lord my God, who teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to war." (Ps. cxliii. 1.)

II. No one in this life, however great may be his sanctity, is free from temptation. This is evident from the life of Christ and His saints. The more perfect a man is, the more fiercely is he assaulted by the Devil, "who is most pleased," as St. Hilary says, "with victory over saints."

Be not, therefore, alarmed or disconcerted when you find yourself attacked by any temptation, but remember the saying of the Wise Man: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation." (Ecclus. ii. 1.) But do not lose courage, for we know, as St. Bernard writes, that "the Devil can overcome none but those who wish to be overcome."

III. Temptations come directly from the Devil, and are permitted by Almighty God. The Devil wishes our ruin, but God intends the increase of our merit and our glory. Thus He wished to try Abraham, thus He tries all His friends. "Because thou wast acceptable to God," said the angel to Tobias, "it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii. 13.) Hence the Apostle admonishes us to rejoice in temptation, and to confide in God; for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

## THURSDAY.

### Christ's First Temptation.

I. "And the tempter coming, said to Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matt. iv. 3.) The Devil attacks Christ with the same weapons that he employed against Adam in paradise. He naturally conceived that Christ must suffer hunger in consequence of His long and severe fast; he therefore tempts Him to gluttony. Observe how craftily he commences his attack against the post which he conceives to be the weakest. Our spiritual enemies are more anxious to destroy us than we are to save our souls.

Guard against them; examine yourself; discover your weakest points, for against these the Devil will direct his most severe assaults.

II. Man may be guilty of gluttony in five several ways: (1) By eating before the proper time; (2) By studiously seeking the most costly and exquisite fare; (3) By too much curiosity and anxiety in dressing even ordinary food; (4) By exceeding the just measure; (5) By too much greediness in eating and drinking. Examine yourself on these points, and remember what St. Isidore remarks: "No man can attain the perfection of virtue who has not first learned to master his appetite."

III. Christ made answer to the tempter: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." By this He teaches us that we ought not to be too solicitous in regard to corporal food; "for the kingdom of God," says St. Paul, "is not meat and drink." (Rom. xiv. 17.) We ought to be much more anxious for spiritual things, for these secure our eternal life. We are not, therefore, to expect to be supplied with food by a miracle, but we must commit these cares to God's ordinary providence, "who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens that call upon Him." (Ps. cxlvi. 9.) Learn, hence, to cut off all superfluous thoughts and conversations on these subjects, and throw yourself entirely on the kind providence of your good and merciful Father.

#### FRIDAY.

#### Christ's Second Temptation.

I. "Then the devil took Him up into the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple." (Matt. iv. 5.)

The enemy imagined, says St. Cyprian, that He whom he could not overcome by gluttony might yield to the temptation of vainglory. He, therefore, was permitted to carry Christ through the air, and to place Him on the top of the temple of Jerusalem. He then attempted to persuade Him to cast Himself down and prevent Himself from being injured, in order that those who were below, being astonished at the miracle, might begin to know and honor Him. Ponder how subtle and dangerous a temptation this is, because man is naturally covetous of praise and honor, and examine whether vainglory does not sometimes insinuate itself into your actions.

II. "Cast Thyself down," said the Tempter to Christ. Such is the language which he addresses to all sinners; for to sin is really to fall down. He endeavors to persuade all men to cast themselves down, that is, to bend their thoughts and cares and affections to the things of this earth, and to immerse themselves in them. Examine, in general, by what temptations you are assaulted, and how you resist them. Do not listen to him, but rather attend to the words of the Apostle: "Seek the things that are above; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth." (Col. iii. 1.)

III. How resolutely Christ resists this temptation to vainglory, and by His reply disconcerts His adversary. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matt. iv. 7.) We must not tempt God, that is, we must not expect miracles from God, when we can gain the object by employing human means. Learn, therefore, both to condemn the applause and esteem of the world, and not to expect extraordinary favors, visitations, or illustrations from God. These wishes are inconsistent with the spirit of humility and "every proud man is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 5.)



**SATURDAY.****Christ's Third Temptation.**

I. "Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." (Matt. iv. 8.) This is the third device of the Devil, and the most forcible of all; for by these means he overcomes most men whom he attacks. For the promise of wealth and honor seduces thousands. "Gold and silver hath destroyed many." (Ecclus. viii. 3.) The Tempter, however, as he always acts in regard to the children of pride and pomp, offers more than he can perform. "All these," he says, "will I give Thee if, falling down, Thou wilt adore me." In the same manner, the Devil, when he wishes to lead us into sin, promises us happiness, honor, and enjoyment; but those who listen to him are universally and uniformly deceived and disappointed.

II. Christ resisted the temptation with constancy and resolution, and taught us by His example that we ought not to commit any sin, even "to gain the whole world." And yet how many thousands rush headlong into hell for a more trifling gratification than the enjoyment of the whole world! "Begone Satan! for it is written, The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him alone shalt thou serve." Examine whether you serve and adore the Lord your God as you ought, or whether you do not rather follow your inordinate desires, and, by sacrificing your duty to them, virtually adore the enemy of your salvation. "For by whom a man is overcome," writes St. Peter, "of the same also is he a slave." (2 Pet. ii. 19.)

III. After the third repulse, "the devil left Him, and behold angels came and ministered to Him." (Matt. iv. 11.) Think with what alacrity those heavenly spirits come, sent by the eternal Father, and with what reverence they serve their Lord. Those who serve or help others, even in the meanest offices, serve Christ in His little ones. Recollect the remark of St. Luke: "When all the temptation was ended, the devil departed from Him for a time." (Matt. iv. 11.) Do not, therefore, consider yourself secure from the attacks of your spiritual enemies although you may have several times repulsed them. "It is necessary," writes the eloquent St. Chrysostom, "that we should employ great vigilance, because we are in continual war, and enjoy no peace."

#### FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ a Sacrifice.

"I will go into Thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay Thee my vows which my lips have uttered." (Ps. lxx. 13.)

I. "If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." (Matt. v. 23, 24.) The Eucharist is, of all others, the most excellent offering that can be made to God as a propitiation for the living and the dead. "Christ hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness." (Eph. v. 2.) What a treasure we possess in this sacrifice!

II. This Divine sacrifice possesses three excellences and advantages above all the excellences and advan-

tages of the sacrifices of the old law: (1) In its exterior decorum, for it is more decent and is performed without the revolting sight of burning or the effusion of blood; (2) In its interior worth and dignity it far excels the sacrifices of the old law, for, in them, only beasts were immolated, but in this the Son of God is offered; (3) As to the effects; for this sacrifice possesses a virtue and efficacy which are beneficial to the living in this world, to the suffering souls in purgatory, and productive of increasing glory to the saints in heaven.

III. In order to offer this sacrifice with advantage, singular piety, in the first place, is requisite. God requires, in a moral sense, what He required from the priests of the old law in a physical point of view. If any one of the descendants of Aaron was deformed in body, he might eat of the food which had been offered, "yet so that he enter not within the veil nor approach to the altar, because he hath a blemish and he must not defile My sanctuary." (Lev. xxi. 23.) The next requisite is fraternal charity and brotherly union. "If thou offer thy gift, etc., first go to be reconciled to thy brother." This was required in all sacrifices, but it is chiefly called for in that of the holy Eucharist, which was instituted to unite us all together as members of the same body, under the same head. Hence it is called, in the language of the Council of Trent, "the seal of unity, the bond of charity, and the symbol of concord."

**MONDAY.****First Call of the Apostles.—I.**

(John i. 36.)

I. When Christ had determined to choose His Apostles, as agents to spread His gospel over the whole world, He did not go to Jerusalem, to Rome, nor Athens, in order to select the wise, the rich and the noble, whom He might have as easily drawn to Himself, as He did the Magi at His birth; but He chose such as were poor, simple and contemptible in this world. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God." (Rom. xi. 33.) Who, in our days, would have made such a selection? Jesus Christ made this choice for two reasons. 1. In order to show His esteem of, and consequently, the value of humility; a virtue essentially necessary for His Apostles and their successors. 2. He chose these men, in order to display more effectually the power of God, in producing great effects by the means of weak instruments. "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise." (1 Cor. i. 27.)

II. These men were not chosen from among the assembled people, which would seem to be necessary to give authority to their preaching; but they were selected as it were by chance, and without any notoriety. Thus, when two of John the Baptist's disciples heard their master say in commendation of Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John i. 36), they followed Him. Christ turning around, courteously asked them, "What seek you?" and having conducted them home, invited them to

a further acquaintance. Learn to be courteous and obliging to all, to conduct your affairs solidly well and without noise and ostentation.

III. One of these disciples was St. Andrew, who being himself inflamed with the love of God, immediately wishes to impart the same feelings to others. Finding therefore his brother Peter, he brings him to Christ, and says to him, "We have found the Messias." By a special act of Divine Mercy you have found the Messias, in preference to so many others, who remain in the spiritual darkness of heresy, infidelity, or schism. Be grateful for the favor, and endeavor by every means which your state of life affords, to bring others to *the way, the truth, and the light*. "For God has given to every one a commandment concerning his neighbor." (Ecclus. xvii. 12.)

## TUESDAY.

### First Call of the Apostles.—II.

I. "On the following day He would go into Galilee, and He findeth Philip." (John i. 43.) Christ found many others on the road, but He found Philip in a special manner, and selecting him for eternal life said, "Follow Me." Philip immediately obeyed the Divine call. Reflect how many thousands of able and renowned characters God has suffered to perish in their errors, and has selected you like another Philip, and "has made you as a chosen arrow in His quiver; He hath hidden you." (Is. xlix. 2.) Take care that you follow the Lord as Philip did, and do not undervalue so great a favor.

II. "Philip findeth Nathaniel and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth." (John

i. 46.) "The love of God," says St. Gregory, "is not idle." Philip, as soon as he discovered Christ, immediately hastened to bring others to Him. Ponder the words of Christ, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Examine if your conduct entitle you to such an honorable testimony; endeavor at least to merit it. Constantly preserve purity of intention, for "a heart that goeth two ways shall not have success." (Ecclus. iii. 28.)

III. Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Convince yourself practically that everything is exposed to the eyes of God, that the most secret of your actions cannot escape Him, and that He is perfectly acquainted with every one of your thoughts in all their bearings, and every one of your most private intentions. Take care to present to Him in yourself an object worthy of His approbation. Ponder also the noble confession of Nathaniel: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." (John i. 49.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Second Call of Peter and Andrew.**

I. "Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brothers." (Matt. iv. 18.) The first call of these two Apostles, says Augustine, was only to a familiarity, and they afterward returned to their ordinary occupation of fishing. The second, was to leave all to follow Him, and to become His Apostles. Thus a soul is disposed by degrees to perfection. Ponder the import of these words, "Come after Me and I will make you fishers of men." You must follow the footsteps of Christ if you wish to be a fisher of men.

II. How great is the dignity of a fisher of men! "Of all Divine things the most Divine is to co-operate with God for the salvation of men." Examine how you can concur to this noble work according to your state of life and vocation. It was the salvation of souls that called Jesus Christ down from heaven, from the throne of His glory, and induced Him to undergo so many labors, and ultimately to surrender Himself to pains and torments on the bloody cross. Endeavor, as far as you can by prayer, counsel, and particularly by good example, to assist the Redeemer in His holy design.

III. "And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him." Mark their prompt obedience; they neither excuse themselves, nor plead incapacity, nor poverty. Such ought to be your obedience to God, and to His holy inspirations, to superiors, and those who are in your regard, the representatives of God, without any complaint, murmur, or excuse. Worldly cares and business are the nets that entangle and hinder man from surrendering himself without reserve to God. You must therefore leave all if you wish to follow Christ and lead an apostolical life. "For no man can serve two masters." (Matt. vi. 24.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### Call of St. James and St. John.

Matt. iv.

I. "Going on from thence, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother." (Matt. iv. 21.) Observe how Christ first called to the apostleship, two brothers, Peter and Andrew, and then James

and John, in order that on these, as on four pillars, he might build His Church. He also wished to teach us, that His disciples ought to be well grounded in fraternal affection, according to His own expressions, used afterwards, "By this shall all men know, that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." (John xiii. 35.) Examine yourself, therefore, most seriously upon this point, and remember, that fraternal charity is an essential characteristic of Christianity.

II. "And they immediately left their nets and their father, and followed him." Those who aspire to the perfection of a religious life, or who wish to lead an apostolic life, must not only renounce their worldly possessions, but even their parents, for Christ's sake. They must convert their human affections into Spiritual love, and make them subordinate to the Divine service. Examine whether your human affections do not sometimes prevent you from aspiring to higher perfection and from leading a more virtuous and regular life.

III. The word *immediately* is not inserted in the text by the sacred writer, without mystery. The two brothers were mending their nets with their aged parent, but as soon as Christ called them, they left their nets as they were. The age of their father, his probable wants, and the need that he might have of their services, presented no opposition to their calling. They knew that the God, whom they followed, when they left their parent, would in His kind providence protect him; and would take better care of him than they could. Their obedience was prompt and perfect. Let your obedience be like theirs; avoid making excuses when God calls you, or the voice of obedience speaks.



**FRIDAY.****Call of Matthew.**

I. "And when Jesus passed on from thence, He saw a man sitting in the custom house, named Matthew, and He saith to him, follow Me." (Matt. ix. 9.) Great was the force of this call, which was able to withdraw a man from his riches: and yet the same call, perhaps, would not be forcible enough to withdraw you from smaller impediments. Who can despair of salvation, when he sees public sinners taken out of a custom house, assumed not only to the friendship of God, but raised to the highest dignity of the apostleship." Truly, "His tender mercies are over all His works." (Ps. cxliv. 9.)

II. Christ did not refuse to eat with Matthew and other publicans, in order that He might gain them, although the hypocritical Pharisees murmured at it. Learn from this that there is nothing so holy, as to escape the censures of the wicked. Hence, if on any occasion it be your fate to suffer reprehension or slander for having performed good actions, remember that "The disciple is not above his Master. nor the servant above his Lord." (Matt. x. 24.)

III. Consider the mild reply which Christ made to His calumniators, "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick; for I am not come to call the just but sinners." (Matt. ix. 12.) Since Christ presents Himself to your consideration as a physician, reveal your distress, wounds and diseases to him: for, as St. Augustine observes, "No disease is incurable to the Omnipotent physician; only permit yourself to be cured

by Him; do not hinder His hand, He knows what He is doing; be content not only when He strokes you, but also when He employs the lancet."

## SATURDAY.

### Call of St. Paul.

I. "And Saul as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1), made every exertion to destroy the infant Church. Ponder the infinite mercy of God, in regard to Saul. He was employed in persecuting the faithful, and crushing the rising Spirit of Christianity, when our Lord, on the contrary, not seeking revenge, but "thinking thoughts of peace" (Jer. xxix. 11), mercifully prevents him, and brings him to a sense of his duty. In the full career of his persecution, he casts him from his horse, and calls upon him, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?" (Acts ix. 6.) Learn to reverence Christ in your neighbors, and remember that injuries done to them are done to Christ Himself.

II. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Ponder his admirable resignation to the Divine will. So you ought to resign yourself to the Divine will, and to offer up your prayers to Him. You ought to be ready for His every dispensation, and do all you can to know His will in all things. When you have discovered it, no earthly consideration whatsoever ought to prevent you from putting it into execution.

III. "Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee, what thou must do." Although our Lord, in a miraculous manner, prostrated Saul on the ground, yet He would not instruct him Himself, but sent him to

Ananias to learn His Divine will. Learn to reverence and acknowledge God in your superiors and His will in theirs. Observe, also, how Saul spent three whole days in prayer, without either eating or drinking, before he had his sight restored to him. Fasting and prayer are the best dispositions for the receiving of spiritual sight. Lastly, until Ananias had imposed his hands upon him, "his eyes being open he saw nothing." This represents the state of a sinner, whence it is said, "Blind the heart of this people, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." (Is. vi. 10., and Luke viii. 10.)

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ Your Viaticum.

"Arise and eat, for thou hast a great way to go." (3 Kings, xix. 7.)

I. It is recorded in the gospel of to-day, that Christ fed the multitude that followed Him into the desert, by the miraculous multiplication of bread and fishes. "If I send them away fasting, to their own houses," He said, "they will faint in the way." (Mark viii. 3.) We are all travelling through the desert of life, to our own country: "Whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 6.) We must, therefore, be provided with necessary food for our long journey, lest we fail in the way, or linger, through weariness, in this contemptible world, instead of passing on to our heavenly country. Therefore, as the father-in-law said in the book of Judges, "Taste first a little bread, and strengthen thy stomach, and so thou shalt depart." (Judges xix. 5.)

II. This strengthening food is properly the Holy

Eucharist, and hence it is communicated to us in the form of bread. This bread enables us to proceed on our journey with alacrity, to overcome its toils and labors, and to resist our spiritual enemies that attempt to impede us on our passage. The bread, which the angel gave to Elias, was a lively figure of this bread. "He walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb." (3 Kings xix. 8.)

III. Though this food be in itself most exquisite and strengthening, nevertheless, it does not produce its good effects except in a well regulated and healthy stomach. If it be foul, this food overcharges and weakens it the more. "Therefore," says St. Paul, "are there many infirm and weak among you," because they receive Christ's body and blood unworthily. Prepare therefore your soul, and purify it from all disorderly affection, and then this heavenly food will enable you to run on cheerfully in the way of God's commandments, according to the oracle of the Psalmist, "I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart." (Ps. cxviii. 32.)

## MONDAY.

### Three Classes who follow Christ.—I.

I. Whilst Christ was walking by the sea of Tiberias, with multitudes around Him, "a certain scribe came and said to Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go." (Matt. viii. 19.) This was in appearance a liberal oblation of himself; but Christ did not accept of him. The holy Fathers are of opinion that this man wished to follow Christ only for gain, because he thought in consequence of His miracles and the concourse of the people, He must collect considerable sums

of money. Others say that the scribe wished to follow Christ out of ostentation, because he thought that Christ would give him the power of working miracles. O, how many in the world pretend to follow Christ, who in reality seek their own ends!

II. Consider the answer which Christ gave the scribe. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head." As if He wished to insinuate this sentiment—why should you wish to follow Me for worldly wealth, when I have no lodging of My own, being more poorly provided than the very beasts of the field and the birds of the air? O wonderful poverty of this sovereign King! This poverty, however, is of such immense value as to be able to purchase the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.)

III. The true disciples of Jesus Christ ought, like their master, to have no coffers in which to hoard their treasures (as foxes "have their holes"), and they ought not to be like birds who build their nests on high; that is, they ought not to seek high and dignified employment, but court humility and obscurity. Their Master was "poor and in labors from His youth." (Ps. lxxxvii. 16.) Ponder the import of the Prophet's words: "Though thou be exalted as an eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Abdias, 4.)

## TUESDAY.

### Three Classes who follow Christ.—II.

I. "Christ said to another, follow Me, and he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." (Luke

ix. 59.) This call was a great mercy and favor on the part of God, and yet the disciple wished not to accept of it without making his own conditions. He wished first to bury his father who was dying, or, as others explain the passage, he wished to take care of him until he died, and then enter seriously into the service of God. Thus, many wish to serve God, but according to their own ideas, and after they have gained some desired object in the world, enjoyed some of its pleasures, or gratified some favorite feeling. After this is accomplished, when life can no longer be coupled with pleasure, they are willing to surrender their old age to God, to virtue and religion. How often are such characters disappointed!

II. Our Lord answered, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Thus He teaches us to prefer God to our parents, friends and kindred. He does not forbid us to love them, nor to perform our duty toward them, but He wishes natural affection to be secondary to the Divine service. He wishes His disciples to throw off all carnal affection; and hence He says in another place, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters (that is, love them less than the service of God), he cannot be My disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.)

III. Christ calls those dead who live for the world and in sin. There are two kinds of death, one of the body and the other of the soul. The body dies when the soul is separated from it, and the soul dies when it is separated from God by sin. Christ therefore says, let those that are dead to God take care of those that are dead to the world: but do you take care to preserve the life of your soul, lest you fall into sin and be cast off from the

face of God. "She that liveth in pleasures is dead while she is living." (1 Tim. v. 6.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Three Classes who follow Christ.—III.**

I. A third came to Christ and offered himself to follow Him; but begged that he might first return home and dispose of his affairs, and take leave of his father and friends. "I will follow Thee, Lord, but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house." (Luke ix. 61.) This request was, in appearance, very reasonable, but Christ did not grant it. Every dangerous delay in the service of God ought to be carefully avoided. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day." (Ecclus. v. 8.)

II. Christ replies, "No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 62.) The ploughman, who has his hands on the plough and looks the contrary way, is incapable of ploughing; in the same manner, he who intends to be a disciple of Christ, and turns round to look on worldly affairs is not fit to preach the gospel. The ploughman must see what is before him, so must Christ's disciples, "forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth to those that are before." (Phil. iii. 13.)

III. In this reply we are admonished to be constant and persevering in the service of God. "A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun, but a fool is changed as the moon." (Ecclus. xxvii. 12.) Examine yourself how constant you are in your good purposes, whether you retain the first fervor of your conversion, or such as you remember you have felt on former occasions. "Be

steadfast in the way of the Lord" (Ecclus. v. 12), and if you discover that your devotion has grown cold, "do penance and do the first works." (Apoc. ii. 5.)

## THURSDAY.

### Call of the Rich Young Man.—I.

I. As Christ was passing through Judea, "a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life?" (Luke xviii. 18; Mark x. 17.) Such ought to be your thoughts and cares; they ought to have for their object not the transitory and miserable goods of this life, which vanish "like a vision of the night," but the permanent and solid enjoyment of a happy eternity. Excite yourself to a feeling desire of these enjoyments, and often ask yourself this all-important question: "What shall I do to possess everlasting life?"

II. Christ first answered, "Keep the commandments." (Matt. xix. 17.) This is necessary for all men; and it will not be sufficient to keep one or more of them only, but you must observe them all, for "whosoever offendeth in one point is become guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) Examine, therefore, how you keep these commandments; your observation of them ought to be exact and perfect, according to the expression of the royal Psalmist, "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently." (Ps. cxviii. 4.)

III. The young man having answered that he had kept all the commandments of the law from his youth, "Jesus, looking on him, loved him, and said to him, Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor: and come, follow Me" (Mark x. 21); or as St. Matthew records



it, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me." (Matt. xix. 21.) It is therefore a sign and effect of God's love to a person when He invites him to renounce all things, and follow Christ by embracing poverty. Examine what God requires of you on this point, and endeavor to be poor at least in affection, in order that you may the more easily follow your Master, "who, being rich, became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be made rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

#### FRIDAY.

#### Call of the Rich Young Man.—II.

I. "When the young man heard this word ["Go sell all thou hast"], he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matt. xix. 22.) It frequently happens with us that we make resolutions of doing great things for God, and wish for occasions of suffering for Him, but when the occasion offers, we fail and feel a melancholy apathy. Remark that this young man refused to obey Christ's call because he was rich. If God had not bestowed riches upon him, he would probably have been a favorite disciple. If, therefore, God have removed this impediment from you, be grateful for the favor: for otherwise, being entangled with the cares of this world and hindered by them from obeying the call of God, you might have been lost.

II. Consider the observation which Christ made after the young man's departure: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle,

than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke xviii. 24.) If, therefore, you wish to enter heaven with ease, divest yourself of all superfluities, and of every inordinate inclination for riches and the conveniences which they procure ; for "they who would become rich," writes St. Paul, "fall into temptation and the snare of the devil." (1 Tim. vi. 9.)

III. Consider the expression of St. Peter on this occasion: "Behold, we have left all things and followed Thee." Hence the holy Fathers infer that the Apostles had made a vow of poverty, and left everything, not only what they had, but what they might have, and even the desire of having. Ponder the greatness of the reward which Christ promises to all those who make these sacrifices for His sake: "They shall receive a hundred times as much now in this time, and in the world to come life everlasting." (Mark x. 30.) O incomparable purchase! Prefer eternal life to every earthly possession.

## SATURDAY.

### Vocation in General to Follow Christ.

I. Christ has prescribed certain laws to all those who wish to be members of His school. The most important of these laws are recorded in St. Luke: "He said to all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke ix. 23.) These, therefore, are the general laws of His school, viz., self-abnegation, daily carrying one's cross, and imitation of Christ in all things. Examine yourself on these subjects; for without a faithful practice of these virtues, and without an observance of these laws, you cannot be a disciple of Christ.

II. Consider more in particular what it is to deny one's self. Self-denial properly consists in abandoning one's own will, "stripping yourself of the old man, with his deeds." (Colos. iii. 9.) Think how necessary this is, and, on the contrary, how dangerous it is to follow one's own will and judgment. Examine your conscience on this subject, and see how you may improve in this self-abnegation to the greater glory of God. Without self-denial there can be no true religion or virtue on earth, because the human will is naturally prone to evil, and if not denied it will certainly prefer vice to virtue. No one can be religious or virtuous without imitating the suffering Redeemer.

III. The Apostle exhorts us to carry our cross daily in these words: "Always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) No day, therefore, ought to pass in which the disciple of Christ does not make some progress in mortification. Hence the learned St. Augustine remarks, "The whole life of a Christian, if he lives according to the Gospel, is a cross and a martyrdom." Embrace, therefore, your cross willingly, and whatever is disagreeable to flesh and blood; for the cross will be a passport to an everlasting life of happiness.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ as a Good Tree.

"Let My Beloved come into His garden and eat of the fruit of His apple-trees." (Cant. v. 1.)

I. It is recorded in the Gospel of to-day that "every good tree yieldeth good fruit." (Matt. vii. 17.) Christ above all others is the Good Tree, and is often com-

pared in the Scripture to several kinds of trees. We read in the Canticles, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is My Beloved among the sons." (Cant. ii. 3.) Other men are trees of the wood, and produce no other than wild and sour fruit, to wit, sin. Christ alone, in the sense of the Canticles, is the apple-tree which brings forth delicious fruit; and as the apple by its juice gives both food and liquid, so Christ by giving us His precious body and blood in the Eucharist is both the meat and drink of our souls.

II. Your soul is a garden planted by God's own hands, according to the Prophet: "Their soul shall be as a watered garden." (Jer. xxxi. 12.) In this garden will be planted to-day that heavenly Tree, the Tree of Life. This Tree yields twelve fruits, which are, according to the Apostle, "charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity." (Gal. v. 23.) Oh, how you ought to long for the hour when "your Beloved will come into His garden and eat the fruit of His apple-trees—that is, of good works—which He will co-operate with you in producing in your soul!

III. If you wish to enjoy the advantages of this fruit, you must seat yourself under the shadow of the tree, by attentively contemplating its good qualities and excellence. Thus did the spouse in the Canticles, "I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired, and his fruit was sweet to my palate." (Cant. ii. 3.) Prepare yourself therefore by holy desires, and you will be permitted "to taste and see, that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. xxxiii. 9.)

**MONDAY.****The Marriage Feast at Cana.—I.**

I. "And there was a marriage in Cana of Gallilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also was invited and His disciples to the marriage." (John ii. 1.) Our kind Lord did not refuse to be present at the marriage feast, because He wished to do good to many, and besides to confirm His disciples in their faith. Observe with what gravity and modesty He behaves Himself on the occasion, and learn moderation in days of mirth and festivity. "Let the just feast" and rejoice, says the Psalmist, but it must be "before God." (Ps lxxvii. 4.)

II. The wine began to fail, and the Blessed Virgin of her own accord without being asked, is anxious to relieve their necessity, in requital for their kind invitation, and therefore she tells her Son, "they have no wine." How much more anxious is this Holy Virgin, in regard to the spiritual necessities of those who are devoted to her. "By how much she is more holy than the other saints," says St. Augustine, "by so much is she more anxious for our good." Beseech her to intercede with her Blessed Son in your behalf, for you stand much in need of the wine of charity and devotion.

III. Christ replies to her, with seeming harshness, "Woman, what is that to Me and to thee." (John ii. 4.) By this answer He teaches His followers, not to appoint God a time in which He must help us, as those did, who were reprehended by Judith, "You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed Him a day, according to your pleasure." (Judith viii. 13.) He wishes to teach us also, that in the service of God, we

must divest ourselves of all carnal affections. In order to inculcate this lesson more deeply, Christ is never heard to address the Blessed Virgin, by the tender name of Mother, not even when He was hanging on the cross. Hence, Moses speaking of the Levites says, "He who hath said to his father and mother, I do not know you, and to his brethren, I know you not. These have kept Thy word and observed Thy covenant." (Deut. xxxiii. 9.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Marriage Feast at Cana.—II.

I. "His mother saith to the waiters, whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." (John ii. 5.) Admire the confidence, which the Blessed Virgin reposed in her Divine Son, notwithstanding the apparent asperity of His answer. She speaks to the servants as if she were certain, that her request had been granted. Observe that the confidence of obtaining what was asked, was grounded on an exact compliance with what our Lord should enjoin. "If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you." (John xv. 7.) Be careful, therefore, to fulfil whatever God commands you, either by Himself, or by your superiors and directors.

II. Consider the injunction of Christ, "fill the water pots with water." (John ii. 7.) It was wine that was wanted, and He bids them to fill the vessels with water. He could as easily have created wine in them, as have changed the water into wine. But God frequently commands things, which seem to have little connection with the desired effect, in order to try our obedience. Besides, He wishes that we should concur with Him, in the

work of our salvation. "He who created you," says St. Augustine, "without your own exertions, will not save you without them."

III. Consider the perfect example of obedience given by the servants. They make no reply; they inquire for no reason for the command, but instantly fill the vessels completely. Thus ought we to fulfil the commands of God, and the injunctions of His vicegerents, readily, entirely and fully. Almighty God will have nothing maimed or imperfect offered to Him in sacrifice. Take care that your works are full and perfect, lest you hear the complaint of God, "I find not thy works full before my God." (Apoc. iii. 2.)

### WEDNESDAY.

#### The Marriage Feast at Cana.—III.

I. Consider the greatness of the miracle; the creature obeyed the will of Christ, and the water was immediately changed into wine. Imagine the joy which the Virgin experienced on this occasion; how the Apostles were strengthened in their faith, and how all the guests were astonished. Mark the efficacy of the Holy Virgin's intercession; by her means He wrought His precursor's sanctification and performed His first miracle. Learn hence, that all blessings, spiritual and temporal, are derived through her.

II. Consider the words of the chief steward: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, then that which is worse." (John ii. 10.) Thus the world ever acts with its votaries; at first it presents them the cup of joy, allurements and pleasures. "Let us crown ourselves with roses," it says, "before they be withered. Let no

meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury. Let us every where leave tokens of joy." (Wis. ii. 8.) But afterwards it plunges the poor soul into vexation, and trouble, and distress. Its happiness "goeth in pleasantly: but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk." (Prov. xxiii. 31.) "Their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters most bitter." (Deut. xxxii. 32.)

III. The conduct of God is perfectly opposite to this. He keeps his good wine for the last. He first afflicts and tries his friends, and then comforts and crowns them. "Thou hast shown Thy people hard things, Thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow." (Ps. lix. 5.) But afterwards, "they shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.) Christ did not change the water into wine, until that of His entertainer had failed, for spiritual comfort is not found until sensual pleasures are abandoned and contemned. Thus the manna did not fall from Heaven, until the food which the Israelites had brought from Egypt had failed, and afterwards again, "Manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land." (Josue, v. 12.)

## THURSDAY.

### Christ Drives out the Buyers and Sellers.—I.

I. Jesus entering the temple "found in it those that sold oxen, and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting." (John ii. 14.) These were sold and bought for the sacrifices, yet our Divine Master was displeased, that traffic should be carried on in the house of God. Learn from this to respect the sacredness of



churches, and to be present in them with external modesty and silence accompanied by internal devotion and humility. If David could say of the ancient temple, "Holiness becomes Thy house, O Lord, unto the length of days," (Ps. xcii. 5.) with how much more propriety may it be said of Christian churches?

II. Christ, inflamed with zeal, and anxious "to do away with this pollution" of His Father's house, "when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and He poured out the changers' money, and the tables He overthrew." (John ii. 15.) He repeated the same action a little before His passion. This meek and humble lamb, when His Father's honor was concerned, assumed the character of a lion, fulfilling the expression of the Prophet, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." (Ps. lxxviii. 10.) With such zeal ought all those to be inflamed, whose duty it is to prevent the sins of their neighbors.

III. This zeal for His glory is most pleasing to God: He reproaches some of His prophets, "You have not gone up to the race of the enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel." (Ezech. xiii. 5.) Hence, St. Gregory writes, "There is no sacrifice more pleasing to God, than the zeal of souls." True zeal consists in this, that you endeavor to correct everything you see wrong in others, by proper means; and if you cannot succeed, to bear it with patience, and pray for them. Observe how cold you are on this subject, as if like another Cain, you were not your brother's keeper.

## FRIDAY.

**Christ Drives out the Buyers and Sellers.—II.**

I. Imagine you hear the words of Christ, "Make not the house of My Father a house of traffic" (John ii. 16), and at another time, a little before His passion, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." (Matt. xxi. 13.) Hence, we are taught to exercise due reverence, both external and internal, in God's church. Examine whether you make it a house of prayer, or do not rather think there of your temporal affairs.

II. According to the Apostle, your soul is a temple of God: "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16.) Hence, the terrible sentence which follows, "But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Examine, therefore, whether your soul be a house of prayer, that is, whether your mind be frequently raised to God, or whether it be not rather devoted to worldly concerns and earthly things. If this be unfortunately the case, drive thence all these undue affections and attachments; offer violence to yourself, for "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.)

III. Christ did not bring the scourge into the temple, but made it of the cords, which He found there. Thus our Lord does not carry with Him a scourge against us, but makes one of our sins. Sin is its own worst punishment, for what can be equal in torture to the reproaches of a lacerated conscience, or, if the sinner's state be yet more deplorable, what can be a greater curse than the silence of an obdurate heart? Divest yourself, then, of all sin,

and God can find no instrument of punishment against you. You can find no real gratification in sin, and by seeking for it there, you only increase your misery.

### SATURDAY.

### Christ's Discourse with Nicodemus.

I. Nicodemus being a man of high character, among his fellow citizens, and afraid of the censures of the world, came during the night, for instructions to Christ. He came in this private manner, "for fear of the Jews," for his mind probably revolted at the idea of appearing among the unlettered and poor disciples of the Man-God. How many thousands have lost their immortal souls by indulging this feeling! How many at this moment indulge it! Do not imitate their example, but say with St Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." (Rom. i. 16.) Confess God both confidently, and openly, for Christ says: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty." (Luke ix. 26.)

II. As an affectionate master, Christ accommodated Himself to the weakness of His disciple, and instructed him in many important points. He informed him of the necessity of baptism; of the causes of His coming into the world; of His passion, that was to ensue; and of the necessity of faith for salvation. Give God thanks for this information, which is equally communicated to you, and ponder in a particular manner, the benefit of spiritual regeneration. "You must be born again." (John iii. 7.) Consider, also, the greatness of God's love for the world, "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."

III. "The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than the light." O, shameful neglect, examine yourself whether in your actions you love darkness, rather than light, "for every one that doeth evil hateth the light." Do you do nothing in private, which you would be ashamed of in public? Beware of this, "for there is nothing hid, that shall not be revealed, nor secret, that shall not be known." (Matt. x. 26.)

#### **EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

##### **Christ Coming to Exact an Account.**

"Render an account of thy stewardship." (Luke xvi. 2.)

I. "There was a certain rich man, who had a steward." Imagine yourself to be this steward, whom our Lord has intrusted with several important things, external and internal, supernatural as well as natural. What advantage have you taken of them? As yet but little, it is to be feared, has been done. Examine yourself thoroughly, and you will probably find many things out of order. You have slept out your sleep of tepidity and now you find nothing in your hands; and therefore, you are a disgrace to your Employer, because you have squandered away, not your own goods, for you have nothing, but those, which belong to Him.

II. Our Lord, as your Employer, will wish to-day, to exact from you an account of the goods, with which He has intrusted you. At present His visitation will be conducted with mercy and commiseration; for as holy Job remarks, "He doth not now bring on His fury, neither doth

He revenge wickedness exceedingly." (Job xxxv. 15.) He will rather supply your defects, forgive you your debts, and restore to you by this holy grace, the goods, which you have misspent. Hereafter He will come with an iron rod, to do judgment and justice, and to "search Jerusalem with lamps." (Sophon. i. 12.) Endeavor, therefore, now to please Him, by an exact performance of your duties, for by no other means can you make Him any atonement for your past carelessness.

III. The duties which you have to perform are, 1. That you should humbly beg His pardon, according to St. Matthew, "I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest Me." (Matt. xviii. 32.) 2. Frequent and constant love are required, "Many sins are forgiven her," says Christ to penitent Magdalen, "because she hath loved much." (Luke vii. 47.) 3. You must forgive from your heart, all offences and injuries done against you by others; "forgive and you shall be forgiven." (Luke, vi. 37.) With these affections introduce your God into the closet of your heart and adopt the words of the Psalmist, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant," but "look upon me, according to the multitude of Thy mercies." (Ps. cxlii. 2 and lxviii. 17.)

## MONDAY.

### The Sermon on the Mount.—I.

I. "Seeing the multitude, He went up into a mountain, and opening His mouth, He taught them." (Luke v. 1. 2.) Reflect deeply on the circumstances that attended this memorable sermon on the mount. The uncreated Wisdom of God was the preacher, His pulpit was the bare ground, His auditors were His disciples and other

unlettered men, and He discoursed of true happiness. Accompany the multitude, and seating yourself in spirit at the feet of so great a Master, listen attentively to His instruction; say with young Samuel, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Kings, iii. 10.)

II. In the sermon, Christ performed not only the office of a teacher, but also that of a law-giver, for He explained the ancient and published the new law. "It was said to them of old, thou shalt not kill, but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment." (Matt. v. 21.) Reverence, then this Divine Lawgiver, and thank Him for His sublime precepts. Entreat Him to imprint His holy law in your heart; and say with David, "Set before me for a law, the way of Thy justifications, O Lord, and I will always seek after it." (Ps. cxviii. 33.)

III. He acted also as a counsellor, by exhorting His hearers to aspire to the greatest perfection, even beyond the obligation of the law. Such points of counsel were, to turn the other cheek to the striker; to suffer the man that takes the coat, to take the cloak also; and to go two miles with the person, who forces you to go one. Reflect on the justice of these counsels. They are given by Him, "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," (Colos. ii. 3.) and Who is pronounced by Isaias to be "the counsellor by excellence." (Is. ix. 6.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Sermon on the Mount.—II.

I. Every human being is continually panting for happiness, the good and the wicked are alike desirous of gaining it: but they seek for it by different means.

Christ, therefore, commences His sermon by this subject, as if He were to say, you all desire to be happy; listen then, and I will point out the ways that lead to felicity. Do you, therefore, take care to set your affections on this true happiness, and seek for it by the means which Christ shall point out.

II. How contrary are the ways of God to the ways of man, and His judgments to those of the world. The world believes that happiness exists in honors, riches, and pleasures, and freedom from pain and grief. "They have called the people happy, that hath these things." (Ps. cxliii. xv.) On the contrary, Christ pronounces those happy, who are poor, meek, and humble, who hunger and thirst after justice, and who suffer reproaches and torments. "As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways above yours," (Is. lv. 9.) says the Lord. Examine to which of these classes you belong, whether you follow the principles of Christ, or the principles of the world.

III. Christ honored eight virtues, which are contemptible in the eyes of the world, with the titles of beautitudes. He has made these so many steps, by which we may ascend to Heaven, in order to enjoy our ultimate and everlasting happiness. These are poverty of spirit, meekness, sorrow for sins, hunger and thirst after justice, mercy, purity of heart, the making of peace both with God and men, and the suffering of persecutions for Christ's sake. You must ascend these steps, if you wish to enter into the joys of your Lord. "Blessed is the man, whose help is from Thee; in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps." (Ps. lxxxiii. 6.)

**WEDNESDAY.****The First Beatitude.**

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” (Matt. v. 3.) Ponder, in each particular virtue, its acts, Christ’s example, and its rewards. The proper acts of poverty are considered to be five. 1. He is poor in spirit, who in affection is ready to lose all rather than offend God. 2. He who actually leaves all for God’s sake. 3. He who never aspires to things above himself, and does not presume in himself, and does not court the praises of men. 4. He who denies his own will and judgment, and submits himself to others. 5. He who acknowledges, that every thing, which he has, comes from God, and who is intimately convinced of his own nothingness, acknowledging with the Prophet, “my substance is as nothing before Thee.” (Ps. xxxviii. 6.) Though not bound to practice all, every Christian is bound to practice some of the above acts.

II. Christ has given us admirable examples of poverty of spirit, throughout the whole course of His life, but principally in His crib, in banishment, in His parents’ house, and, lastly, on the cross. Besides, “He debased himself,” as St. Paul writes, (Phil. ii. 7.) becoming obedient, not only to His eternal Father and His earthly parents; but also to His tormentors, even to death itself. Of His doctrine, He publicly asserted, “My doctrine is not mine, but of Him that sent me.” (John vii. 16.)

III. Christ has promised to reward the professors of poverty of spirit, with the possession of Heaven; “Theirs,” he says, “is the kingdom of Heaven.” Reflect how advantageous it is, to obtain the kingdom of Heaven with its eternal happiness, by the exchange of some few



transitory enjoyments of this world. Ponder the excellence of this kingdom, its riches, glory, and perpetuity. "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Hence, St. Gregory Nazianzen had reason to say, "Happy is he, who buys Christ, though the purchase cost him all his goods and fortune."

#### THURSDAY.

#### The Second Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are the meek." (Matt. v. 4.) After poverty of spirit, that is, contempt of the world and its desires, follows meekness, as a child does its parent. The acts of this virtue are chiefly three: 1. To bridle the passion of anger and revenge; and when it is your duty to display zeal, to do it without any perturbation either exterior or interior. 2. To be affable to all, and troublesome to none, neither in word nor action. 3. The third act of meekness is, not to oppose or resist injuries with violence, even when you may lawfully do so, but to suffer contempt with peace and tranquillity of mind. Examine yourself on these heads, and reform whatever stands in need of correction.

II. Christ has given the world a most brilliant example of meekness. Speaking of the future Messiah, the Prophet says: "He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." "The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish." (Matt. xii. 19; Is. xlii. 4.) "He shall not be sad nor turbulent." St. Peter, speaking of him, observes: "When He was reviled, He did not revile;

when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." (1 Pet. ii. 23.) And He says of Himself: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 29.)

III. Christ promises the meek, that "they shall possess the land." They will possess their own hearts, that is, they will be masters of their own passions. They will also possess the hearts of others, according to the author of the Ecclesiasticus: "My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men." (Ecclus. iii. 19.) Lastly, they will possess the land of promise, as their eternal inheritance. "The meek shall inherit the land, and delight in the abundance of peace." (Ps. xxxvi. 11.) Adopt, then, this meekness in your conduct and conversation, in order that you may delight in the abundance of peace, as well in regard to God, as yourself and your neighbor.

## FRIDAY.

### The Third Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are they that mourn." (Matt. iv.) We have three motives for mourning: 1. We ought to indulge compunction for our sins according to the examples of David and St. Peter. 2. We should mourn for the sins of others, and feel compassion for them. 3. We have reason to grieve at our banishment in this world, and our separation from God; "Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged." (Ps. cxix. 5.) This spiritual mourning does not entirely consist in affliction of the mind, but also in refusing those things, which bring pleasure along with them. Hence the Wise Man says:

"Laughter I counted error, and to mirth I said; why art thou vainly deceived?" (Eccles. ii. 2.) Reflect how, on the contrary, you are continually seeking your own satisfaction and enjoyment, and how to these you frequently sacrifice your content.

II. Consider the example of Jesus Christ on this subject. St. Chrysostom writes: "You will often find Christ weeping, but never laughing." And Solomon remarks: "The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth." (Eccles. vii. 5.) Reflect what reasons you have to imitate the example of so great a master, and rank yourself with the wise, rather than the foolish.

III. Consider the reward attached to mourning. "They shall be comforted," in this life with Divine enlightenment and the testimony of a good conscience, and in the next, "they shall be inebriated," O God, "with the plenty of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.) Lament, therefore, your own and your neighbors' sins, for they, who sow in tears, shall reap in joy. On the contrary, "Wo to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep," (Luke, vi. 25.) as it is written in the Apocalypse, "As much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give unto her." (Apoc. xviii. 7.)

## SATURDAY.

### The Fourth Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are they, that hunger and thirst after justice." These pious souls desire everything, without exception, to be fulfilled, which justice and our obligations

to God, as well as to our neighbors, require. They desire to make continual progress in virtue and perfection. They wish perfect justice to exist among all mankind, and do all in their power to gain that object. Finally, they hunger and thirst after Christ our Lord, who is our "justice and sanctification," (1 Cor. i. 30.) by a lively faith and interior relish of His presence. Examine yourself on these points, and discover whether you do not rather loathe justice, than hunger and thirst after it, and ardently seek those things only, which the world loves and admires.

II. During the whole of His life, Christ sought nothing but the accomplishment of His Father's will. "My food," He says, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me." (John iv. 34.) When He hung upon the cross, He exclaimed, "I thirst," (Ib. xix. 28.)—that is, for the sanctification and salvation of all mankind, for whom He died. Such ought to be your hunger and thirst, and not the appetite of the wicked whose God is their belly. (Philip. iii. 19.)

III. Consider the reward of those, who hunger and thirst after justice; "They shall be filled." God will bestow special graces and spiritual comforts on them during this life, and in the next, they will enjoy the beatific vision. "I shall be satisfied," says the Psalmist, "when Thy glory shall appear." (Ps. xvi. 15.) Reflect how this heavenly satiety ought to be desired. It never cloy, and endures for all eternity. Examine your dispositions, whether you would rather enjoy yourself in this world or in the next; you cannot enjoy the happiness of both.

**NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.****Christ a merciful Lord.**

“Hear me, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind.” (Ps. lxxviii. 17.)

I. It is recorded in the Gospel of to-day, that Christ “wept over the city of Jerusalem.” (Luke, xix. 41.) God is sensible of our miseries, and compassionates us; hence He is styled by the Apostle, “the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.” (2 Cor. i. 3.) And again he says, “We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities.” (Heb. iv. 15.) You may, therefore, justly comfort yourself with this thought, that the same merciful God will visit you to-day, to bestow on your souls the riches of His mercy.

II. The mercy of God in regard to man never shone more conspicuously, than in the institution of the holy Eucharist. Well may the Prophet cry out, “He made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord, He hath given food to them that fear Him.” (Ps. cx. 4, 5.) Reflect what a mercy it is in Him to give you His own body and blood for your meat and drink. Who ever did so much for his greatest friend? Expose, therefore, before Him, with the utmost confidence, the miseries of your soul, when He visits you, and beseech Him to remedy them.

III. Above all things beware, when He enters your soul, of giving Him cause to weep over you, as did unhappy Jerusalem. Addressing Himself to that obstinate city, He foretold its evils, and said they would happen, because “it did not know the time of its visitation.” (Luke, xix. 44.) He frequently visits us by holy inspirations, good books, and the like, and by these animates

us to aspire to perfection. Examine how you correspond with these graces, lest He may have reason to say of you, "for the day shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and beat thee flat to the ground." (Luke xliii. 44.)

## MONDAY.

### The Fifth Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are the merciful." (Matt. v. 7.) There are seven acts of spiritual mercy, and seven works of mercy corporal. These are known to every one, who is acquainted with the elements of his religion. These works of mercy, however, must be accompanied with three conditions to render them perfect and acceptable to God. 1. They must extend themselves to all without exception, even to our enemies. 2. We must take advantage of every occasion of doing good, in every species of distress, and exert ourselves to the extent of our abilities. 3. They must be accompanied with internal motives and internal devotion. Examine yourself on this subject, and remember, that a good intention alone, can *sanctify* an action, which might otherwise be only good.

II. On this subject, as well as the other beatitudes, Christ has given us the most perfect example. He addressed Himself to *all* mankind, when in His mercy He said, "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.) He took advantage of every occasion of doing good, therefore, "He was teaching daily in the temple." (Luke, xix. 47.) And "He went about doing good, and healing all, that were oppressed by the devil." (Acts, x. 38.) He performed all these works of mercy with the most tender

affection, for He acted like the good Samaritan, "who bound up the wounds, of him that fell among robbers." (Luke x. 30.) Therefore "go thou and do in like manner."

III. Consider the reward attached to works of mercy. "They shall obtain mercy." This mercy will accompany them in this life, it will extend to both body and soul, and it will be their reward in the next life: "With the same measure, that you shall measure, it shall be measured to you again." (Luke, vi. 38.) Reflect how much you stand in need of God's mercy, and what your case would have been, had God dealt with you according to your deserts. Be merciful, therefore, to others, that you may obtain mercy. Meditate on the sentence of St. James: "judgment without mercy to him, that hath not done mercy." (James ii. 13.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Sixth Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are the clean of heart." (Matt. v. 8.) The Christian, whose heart is clean, is free from all sin, both mortal and venial; his mind is frequently exercised with pious and holy thoughts, and all his actions are accompanied with a right intention. He does nothing to gain the applause of mankind. Hence the Apostle requires from all Christians, "Charity from a pure heart and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith." (1. Tim. i. 5.) Examine the state of your mind on these subjects.

II. Christ was a perfect model of this virtue, for He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1. Pet. ii. 22.) Hence is "the brightness of eternal light,

and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness." (Wisdom, ii. 26.) He frequently reproved the Scribes and Pharisees, because their conduct was so opposite to his own. "Wo to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness." (Matt. xxiii. 25.) Let your conduct be modelled after that of Christ, and avoid the example of these hypocritical Jews.

III. "They shall see God." Such is the reward of the clean of heart. O what a happiness will it be to see God! Labor, therefore, to obtain this purity of heart. The greater it is, the more perfect will be your vision of God, and your essential happiness. Even in this life the knowledge of God, and of Divine things increases in proportion to the purity of our hearts. On the contrary, "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body that is subject to sin," (Wis. i. 4), and "the holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful."

## WEDNESDAY.

### **The Seventh Beatitude.**

I. "Blessed are the peace-makers." (Matt. v. 8.) The character of a Christian requires, that he make, in the first place, domestic peace, that is, that he subject the flesh to the spirit, and the sensual appetite to reason. He is bound to keep peace also with others, to give no one occasion for complaining against him, and to excite no angry thoughts in others. He is obliged, besides, to do what he can to reconcile those who are at variance with one another. But the most perfect act of this virtue is to reconcile sinners to their offended Creator.



II. Christ descended from the throne of His Eternal Majesty, that He might be the Mediator of peace between God and His creatures. Hence He is called "the prince of peace." (Is. ix. 6.) At His birth the angels sang to the shepherds, that their Redeemer had come, to bring "peace to men of good will." (Luke ii. 14.) And when this Divine peace-maker left the world, He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." (John xiv. 27.) He wished that the common salutation of his disciples should be the watchword of peace; hence, after His resurrection He more than once addressed them in the memorable words, "Peace be to you."

III. Peace-makers, "shall be called the children of God." Reflect what a dignity it is, "That we should be named and should be the children of God!" (1 John, iii. 1.) If worldly men conceive themselves elevated, when they happen to be the descendants of some earthly potentate, and pride themselves on their accidental prerogative, how much greater is the dignity of being by real adoption a son of God? Your Lord loves in a special manner all peace-makers; He treats them as His favorite children, and cherishes them with more than paternal affection. Examine how you practice this heavenly virtue, and secure to yourself "the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding," and which may "keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 7.)

#### THURSDAY.

#### The Eighth Beatitude.

I. "Blessed are they, that suffer persecution." (Matt. v. 10.) Under the term persecution, are comprehended all kinds of injuries, afflictions and inconveniences, in re-

lation to fortune, honor, or life. These are caused by the Devil or his ministers, sometimes, also, by mistake (God so permitting), by the just themselves. They are suffered for justice sake, when they are borne with patience and accompanied with the exercise of virtue, and in compliance with our duty toward God and men. They ought not to be suffered with patience only, but with joy at the greatness of the reward; therefore, St. Peter says, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or as coveting the goods of others, but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." (1 Pet. iv. 15.)

II. Christ suffered all kinds of injuries and inconveniences in His honor, in His goods, and in His person, for a cause, which on His part was perfectly just. He suffered in consequence of His publishing His Divine law and endeavoring to bring men back again from vice and folly, into the way of their eternal salvation. Therefore, "Look and make it according to the pattern." (Exod. xxv. 40.)

III. The reward attached to the suffering for justice sake, is no less than "the kingdom of Heaven." When you suffer, then, with joy and patience, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in Heaven." Ponder deeply, therefore, the greatness of the reward, and the truth of the apostolic oracle, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.)

**FRIDAY.****"You are the Salt of the Earth."**

(Matt. v. 13.)

I. As salt preserves from corruption and putrefaction, so is it the part of all apostolical men, to preserve souls from the corruption of sin, and to render the exercise of virtue palatable and agreeable to them. These men, then, ought to be pure and refined from all the dross and alloy of earthly passion by the influence of Divine charity, in order that they may be such themselves as they wish to make others.

II. How effectually did Christ our Redeemer and Saviour produce the effect of salt on us! To purge us and preserve us from sin, He spent Himself entirely on us, and melting away like salt, He communicated to our actions (which of themselves were insipid), the Divine flavor of His precious merits. Besides, by His example and doctrine, He has rendered trials and crosses and persecutions, which of themselves are difficult to be supported, agreeable and palatable. Season all your actions with this salt; apply the words of Leviticus in a spiritual sense, "Whatsoever sacrifice thou offerest, thou shalt season it with salt" (Lev. ii. 13), that is with the merits and example of Christ.

III. "But if the salt lose its savor, it is then good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men." (Matt. v. 13.) In this manner will God treat those, whose duty it is, to watch over the morals of others and teach them virtue, if they neglect their duty. Their example and doctrine should have a Divine efficacy to season the lives of others, but pride, vain glory and love

of the world have destroyed it. "They became vain in their thoughts," says the Apostle, "and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i. 21.) Beware of abusing the means, which you have in your power of being beneficial to others. Every individual of the Christian family is bound to edify by good example; in this sense every one is "the salt of the earth."

### SATURDAY.

### **"You are the Light of the World."**

(Matt. v. 15.)

I. Apostolical men are not only "the salt of the earth," to purge the hearts of men from sin, but also "the light of the world," to enlighten others and direct them in the ways of virtue. "It is the most Divine of all Divine offices," writes a holy Father, "to co-operate with Christ for the salvation of souls." Hence it is most acceptable to God, according to the expression of the Prophet, "They that are learned, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many unto justice, as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii. 3.) It is a property of light to warm and enlighten. Examine yourself how you perform your duty on this subject, and seize every opportunity of being beneficial to your neighbors, particularly by "letting the light of your example shine before them." All instruction is cold, unless it be accompanied and enforced by example.

II. Christ "was the true light, which enlighteneth every man, that cometh into this world." (John i. 9.) He communicated a divine system of doctrine to mankind, illustrated and enforced it by His example, and gives His

followers grace to profit by it, to glorify Him and secure the end of their creation. When light passes through loathsome or infected places, it emerges as pure and uncontaminated as it entered; thus Christ and His apostolic followers, although they converse and treat with sinners, do not partake of their uncleanness. Hence, no one, whose duty it is to reclaim sinners, ought to fear the danger of corruption, if he act in obedience to God, and follow the example of Christ and His Apostles.

III. Christ says, that no one puts a light under a bushel. Thus He reprehends those, who do not employ the talents, which they have received, in enlightening their neighbors, but hide their light, from pusillanimity or sloth. They ought to imitate the stars at their creation, of which Baruch speaks in the sublimest strains. "They were called by the Almighty," says the Prophet, "and they said, here we are, and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him, that made them." (Baruch iii. 25.)

## TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

### Christ our Propitiation.

"With Thee, there is merciful forgiveness: and by reason of Thy law, I have waited for Thee, O Lord." (Ps. cxxix. 4.)

I. Conceive yourself to be that publican, who is mentioned in the Gospel of to-day; for in consequence of your sins, you ought to deem yourself unworthy of raising up your eyes to Heaven, and only deserving of the privilege of striking your breast and crying out continually, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke, xviii. 13.) Call to mind the sins of your past life, and you will

readily discover, with what great propriety you may employ the publican's prayer.

II. You ought to deem it a motive of great confidence, that after your repeated sins and transgressions, you have for your advocate the Judge's Son, and besides, that Christ Himself is your propitiation. For, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." (1 John ii. 2.) Although He be always and every where merciful, yet He is never more so, than in the holy Eucharist, in which, in order that he might be more propitious to us, He condescends to be incorporated with us. That which covered the ark of the covenant in the old law, [was called the *propitiatory*; with much more reason, therefore, may the Eucharist claim that name, for it contains and conceals the living ark of the true covenant between God and man.

III. The Jews were forbidden to do any servile work on the day of propitiation. "You shall do no servile work, in the time of this day," because it is a "day of propitiation." (Lev. xxiii. 28.) Sin is properly a servile work. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." (John viii. 34.) Abstain, therefore, from sin, even from the least fault, especially on days of communion; say to your Lord, when he enters your soul, "For Thy name sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great." (Ps. xxiv. 11.)

## MONDAY.

### The Lord's Prayer.—I.

I. As a perfect master of spiritual life, Christ, whilst He was teaching on the mountain, did not omit to inform His disciples, how they ought to pray. The prayer,

which He taught them, we repeat daily; and in consequence of this, and because it is the best of all prayers, since God is its author, we shall do well to ponder each word of it. To pray well is an object of vital concern in a spiritual life.

“Our Father, who art in Heaven.” (Matt. vi. 9.) In the Old Testament, God was generally called **THE LORD**, but in the new law, He is pleased to be called our Father, and even by His own vassals. He is our Father by the titles of creation, of preservation, and adoption. Take care, then, that you prove yourself to be worthy of such a Father. You are taught to say *our* Father and not *my* Father, because you must acknowledge that God is the universal Father of all, that every one is your brother, and that you ought to love every one. This Father of ours “is in heaven,” as in the seat of His majesty, (though He be actually everywhere present) in order that you may always raise your thoughts to heaven, as to your native country and ultimate destination.

II. “Hallowed be Thy name.” We ought to seek, in the first place, and in all our actions, the honor and glory of God, and do all that we can, to induce mankind to honor and worship Him. We must begin with ourselves, we must love and glorify Him by the sanctity of our lives. Often excite, therefore, these affections in yourselves, and say with the seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts” (Is. vi. 30); and with David: “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name, give glory.” (Ps. cxiii. 9.)

III. “Thy kingdom come.” By this petition we pray, that His kingdom may be increased in this world by His grace; and in the next by His glory. God reigns in the souls of His just, by His grace, according to the expression of the Saints in the Apocalypse, “Thou hast made

us to our God a kingdom." (Apoc. v. 10.) Examine whether God or the world reign in your soul.

## **TUESDAY.**

### **The Lord's Prayer.—II.**

I. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The will of God displays itself in two different ways, viz.: by counsel and by precept. By this petition, then, we pray that all, whom He calls to a religious state of life, may obey His counsels, and holy inspirations, and that every one may observe His commandments. "Give us this day, our daily bread." By this we pray for both corporal and spiritual food, but particularly for the latter, because by it the soul is preserved from spiritual death. "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv. 4.) As you take corporal food every day, so ought you to pray for daily spiritual food.

II. "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." You must first forgive those, who have in any way offended you, before you can expect God's forgiveness of your offences. You are infinitely indebted to God, and in comparison to your offences committed against Him, your brothers' injuries against you are less than trifles. Forgive, therefore, the less debt, that the greater may be remitted. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." (Luke, vi. 37.)

III. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, Amen." By this we pray that we may have efficacious grace to surmount every temptation. It is not in the dispensation of providence, that we should never be assailed with temptations, for our virtue must be tried



and improved; but it is our duty to resist them, and overcome them. By the last words we pray, that we may be delivered both from the guilt and punishment of sin, from all evil, present and to come, and ultimately, that we may enjoy everlasting happiness in the next life. Remember the purport of this Divine prayer whenever you pronounce it.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Other Lessons given on the Mount.**

I. In His sermon on the mount, Christ speaks in the most emphatic language against enmity to our brethren. (Matt. v and vi.) There are three degrees of anger; the first is of thought, the second of word, and the third of action. Reflect on the evils which are the consequences of anger. It blinds reason, it exposes man to grievous crimes, and ultimately to the punishments of hell. Examine yourself on this very important subject, and reform what ought to be corrected.

II. In this memorable discourse, our Divine Legislator forbids us to swear. "Let your speech be, yea, yea, and no, no." (Matt. v. 37.) The habit of swearing, and of everything which approaches this vice, is detestable in the sight of God. It is unworthy of the man, who believes in the existence of God, and much more of the Christian. "A man that sweareth much, shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house." (Ecclus. xxiii. 12.) Examine whether you speak of God, and things that belong to God, with respect and veneration; if you be guilty, you do not love God as you ought.

III. "Take heed that you do not your justice before

men, that you may be seen by them." (Matt. vi. 1.) Our Divine teacher wishes us to avoid vain glory, and not to pride ourselves on our own good works. If we do, we shall receive no reward in heaven. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, Who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) You must not, however, perform virtuous actions from the exclusive motive of edifying your brethren. St. Gregory gives us excellent directions on this subject, when he says, "Let your actions be so performed in public, that the intention, by which you wish to please God alone, be kept in private."

## THURSDAY.

### Christ Sends His Apostles and Disciples.—I.

(Matt. x., Luke, ix. and x.)

I. The Redeemer beholding the spiritual distresses of the Israelites, told His Apostles, "The harvest, indeed, is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send laborers into His harvest." (Luke, x. 2.) The elect constitute the harvest of the Lord; they await the preaching of His Gospel, and the benefit of His sacraments. There are many of them in this country, for whose welfare you ought to be concerned. Pray at least, that God may send zealous workmen into this vineyard, and such as are calculated to reap much fruit. According to your state and condition, spare no pains in promoting the salvation of souls. "Of all Godlike occupations it is the most Godlike, to co-operate with God for the salvation of souls."

II. Christ sent His disciples "two and two," to recom-

mend that charity, which ought to exist among ministers of the Gospel. "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city." (Prov. xviii. 19.) Reflect how necessary this union is among those, who are engaged in assisting their neighbors. What one collects, another ought not to scatter, and that which one builds up, another ought not to pull down. Excite yourself to an universal and apostolical charity for all mankind. Observe also, that these workmen, who are to be employed in the harvest, are to be called and sent, by Christ or His legitimate authority, and not to intrude themselves into it without authority, or by their own private act.

III. Christ gives four commands to His disciples, whom He sends to preach His Gospel. 1. He takes away from them every excuse for avarice. "Gratis you have received, gratis give." (Matt. x. 8.) 2. He orders them to avoid superfluities. "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses." 3. In conveniences, He wishes them to use only such as are indispensable, "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes." 4. Even in ordinary necessities He expresses His wish that they should confide in God alone, and feed on what is placed before them without seeking what is extraordinary and particular, "eating and drinking, such things as they have." (Luke, x.) Meditate on each particular, and reflect how perfect God wishes His servants to be.

#### FRIDAY.

#### **Christ Sends His Apostles and Disciples.—II.**

I. "Behold," says Christ, "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves." (Matt. x. 16.) It is certainly an unheard of kind of warfare, that sheep should be sent to

lions' wolves. How true it is, that "the weak things of this world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong." (1 Cor. i. 27.) He, moreover, admonishes His ministers to be harmless and meek as sheep, not returning evil for evil, but employing themselves entirely for the benefit of their neighbors.

II. "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and simple as doves." Thus He wishes the serpent's wisdom to be united with the simplicity of the dove in the character of His Apostles. He requires that they should be prudent, in seizing proper occasions and times of doing good to their neighbors; simple, in acting with sincerity and purity of intention without double-dealing, acrimony or malice. "Thy eyes are as those of doves," says the spouse in the Canticle, that is, pure and simple. Let these be the model of your rectitude of intention.

III. "Going, preach, saying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand; and going forth, they preached that they should do penance." (Matt. x. 7, and Mark, vi. 12.) Their discourses did not turn on vain, curious or trivial matters, but on subjects, the most interesting in a spiritual point of view. Such ought to be the endeavors, and such the method of preaching, of all those, who are entrusted with the care of souls; they should speak inwardly to the heart, and aim at the spiritual profit of their hearers, and not preach themselves. "Let your applause," says St. Jerome, "be the tears of your auditory."

## SATURDAY.

### The Disciples' Return from Preaching.

I. When the disciples returned from preaching, they felt, as the holy Fathers explain the passage, in some

degree touched with vain-glory, in consequence of the wonders which they had performed. "Lord," they said to their Master, "the devils also are subject to us." (Luke, x. 17.) Observe, how subtle a vice is vain-glory; it insinuated itself into the actions even of the Apostles. Guard against it, then, and remember, that its danger increases in proportion to the goodness of the actions, which you perform.

II. Christ's prehension, "I saw Satan as lightning falling from Heaven." (Luke, x. 18.) As Satan by his pride and ambition fell from Heaven, so do you beware, lest the same vices involve you in the same ruin. Do you also learn to stand in fear, and "if you think yourself to stand, take heed, lest you fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) Angels and Apostles have erred through pride and vain-glory, consequently you have reason to fear.

III. "Rejoice not in this, that spirits are subject to you, but rejoice in this, that your names are written in Heaven." (Luke x. 20). Solid joy can only be found in the exercise of virtue, and in the hopes of eternal life, and not even in special powers or favors, or miraculous gifts. These ought rather to increase our caution, and fear of abusing them, than inspire vanity or pride. Learn, therefore, to seek contentment of mind in heavenly things alone, for the joys of this world are but vain and fictitious. "The joys of the hypocrite," says Job (and remember the world is a hypocrite) "are but for a moment." (Job xx. 5.) Heavenly joys alone are everlasting; "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Is. xxxv. 10.)

**ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.****Christ the Giver of Hearing and Speech to your Soul.**

"O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise." (Ps. l. 17.)

I. In the Gospel of to-day, Christ is recorded to have cured a person, who "was deaf and dumb." (Mark vii. 32.) Consider yourself to be of this character in a spiritual point of view, as you really are, if you be deaf to God's grace and silent in the Divine praises. How often have you resisted His holy inspirations, exciting you to compunction, patience, humility and, in a word, to perfection. How well might he address you, by the mouth of His Prophet, "I called, and you did not answer; I spoke, and you did not hear." (Is. lxx. 12.) Reflect, also, how dumb you are in speaking of God, and of Divine things, whilst you feel that much fruit might be derived both by you and others, were you to engage oftener in spiritual conversation. You may truly say with the Prophet, but in a different sense, "I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jer. i. 6), in what regards spiritual matters.

II. He will visit you in the Eucharist to-day, of Whom it is said in the Gospel; "He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." (Mark, vii. 37.) If He did this in a corporal sense, how much more willing will He be to do it in a spiritual sense, if you be prepared to receive Him. He will open your heart to hear His voice, and make your tongue eloquent in His praises to the edification of others. "The Lord hath given me a

learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word Him, that is weary. In the morning He wakeneth my ear, that I may hear Him as a master." (Is. l. 4.)

III. The preparations necessary for receiving this guest are, 1. Frequent prayer, for the disciples in the Gospel of to-day, "besought Him to lay His hands upon them." 2. Retirement from the noise and bustle of the world, for Christ did not cure the dumb man, until He had "taken him aside from the crowd." 3. Humility, for "wisdom openeth the mouth of the dumb, and makes the tongues of infants eloquent." (Wis. x. 21.) Be, therefore, an infant, that is, without deceit and little in your eyes, in order that you may deserve to be rendered eloquent in the praises of your Lord.

## MONDAY.

### John's Message to Christ.—I.

I. "John heard in prison the works of Christ." (Matt. xi. 2.) Ponder the admirable courage of this precursor of the Messias. He was not afraid of publicly reprehending the impious marriage of the wicked king, but preferred chains, and prison, and death itself to the weakness of dissembling or betraying the truth. Such ought to be the character of all good Christians, particularly of apostolic men. They ought to be full of zeal for the cause of God, to be constant and firm in asserting his rights, and they ought not to know how to yield either to threats or flattery.

II. John being in prison, sent two of his disciples to ask of Christ, "Art Thou He, that art to come?" The Baptist did not himself doubt whether Christ was the

Messias, but he wished his disciples to be confirmed in their faith. Charity always seeks the advantage of others. Do you, on your part, rejoice and give thanks to God, for His having long ago come amongst us, and not having held the world any longer in suspense. Be grateful for the benefits resulting from his incarnation.

III. To this question Christ answers, "Go and relate to John, what you have heard and seen: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them." Christ does not in express terms declare that He is the Messias, to avoid even the shadow of boasting, but proves it from His works. "Louder," says St. Bernard, "is the sound of works, than of words." It is your duty to prove yourself to be a good Christian, and a follower of Jesus Christ in your state of life, whatever it may be, not by words, but by actions. Professions are easily made, but they are of no avail unless they be supported by corresponding deeds. "Let her works," says the Wise Man of the virtuous woman, "praise her." (Prov. xxxi. 31.) Besides, since Christ has been so liberal in bestowing corporal favors, as sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the like, you have every reason to hope for spiritual benefits from him.

## **TUESDAY.**

### **John's Message to Christ.—II.**

I. When the disciples of St. John, had left Christ, He began to speak in commendation of their master. He praised his constancy in virtue; He said, that he was not like a reed tossed and bent in every direction, by the



wind, in consequence of lightness and weakness, but solidly virtuous. Examine yourself seriously, whether this be your character, or whether like a reed you be easily shaken, by the breath of men, in your good purposes, and without the substance of solid virtue, to support your outward appearance of religion. External appearances of virtue, without the substance, is sacrilegious mockery.

II. The Baptist is also commended for the austerity of his life, and that he was not "clothed in soft garments." (Matt. xi. 8.) If you desire to merit the approbation of Christ, you must divest yourself of all superfluities in what regards your body. He is denominated by Christ "an angel," both in relation to his office and to the purity of his life. Endeavor to imitate him in his angelic behavior, and incomparable purity of life.

III. Upon this occasion Christ says, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." Reflect how true was this expression in regard to St. John, to the martyrs, and in a word, to all the saints. There are two descriptions of Christian violence, one exterior, and the other interior. Both are necessary for a virtuous life. The first curbs the senses, the second brings under proper restraint, the wanderings of the imagination and the irregular desires of the will. With good reason, St. Jerome observes, "In proportion as you offer violence to yourself, in the same proportion will you advance." Examine your conduct carefully on this point.

**WEDNESDAY.****Martyrdom of John the Baptist.**

I. "Herod made a supper for his birthday for the princes." (Mark, vi. 21.) Worldly men place their happiness in the enjoyments of this mortal life, which however passes away like a shadow. In opposition to this the Holy Spirit exclaims, "the day of death is better, than the day of one's birth." (Eccles. vii. 2.) The day of our birth introduces us into a world of misery and woe, but the day of our death, if we have spent life well, unites us to God himself. Constantly, therefore, fix your attention on your last moment, and prepare for it in all your actions. Remember your last end and you will never sin.

II. During the festive revelling of that night, the head of a most innocent and holy man was asked for and granted. Observe, to what crimes, riot and luxury, hurry their votaries! Hence, the Wise Man says, "Be not in the feasts of great drinkers." (Prov. xxiii. 20.) Herod fell into the precipice of immorality and cruelty, because he would not listen to the words of St. John, which signifies grace. Beware, therefore, lest you expose yourself to the same ruin, by resisting God's holy grace and inspirations. "Thou that despisest, shalt not thou thyself be despised?" (Is. xxxiii. 1.)

III. St. John received his sentence of death with great joy, and with equal constancy submitted to the stroke, which separated his head from his body. His soul then winged her flight into the bosom of Abraham. "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints." (Ps. cxv. 6.) Entreat God, that you may die the death

of the just, and by that means secure a short and easy passage to heaven. Offer yourself frequently to God, and be willing to endure every pain, and even the loss of life, and all its goods, in His holy service. Imitate the example of so many glorious martyrs, who have died for their faith, by continually practicing virtue, by being constant in your faith and in the exercise of your religious duties.

#### THURSDAY.

##### **The Five Thousand, fed in the Desert.—I.**

I. Consider how great was the multitude that followed Christ into the desert, led thither by the fame of His miracles and doctrine. "He had compassion on them, and He began to teach them many things." (Mark vi. 34.) He first gives them spiritual food, and then corporal nourishment. You must retire into the wilderness, that is, you must leave the noise and folly of the world, and form a solitude in your own heart, if you wish to receive the spiritual food of our Lord. "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart," says God of a faithful soul. Observe, also, the charitable care of the Apostles for the people: "Send away the multitudes," they say, "that going into the town, they may buy themselves victuals." (Matt. xiv. 15.) Although the request proceeded from a principle of charity in the Apostles, their Master had already determined to surpass it, and to give a still brighter example of it.

II. Christ having asked His disciples, what food they had to set before the people; they answered, "we have here but five loaves and two fishes." These were all the provisions that the Apostles possessed; a few loaves and

two fishes, although they themselves were fishermen. Observe, how promptly they declare what food they had, without making any allusion to their own wants, or to the impossibility of procuring food in the desert. Learn, hence, to be kind and charitable to others and remember the command recorded in the book of Tobias. "According to thy ability be merciful." (Tobias iv. 8.)

III. Consider the order in which the miracle was performed. When the loaves were brought, Christ commanded "the multitude to sit down on the grass." He raises His eyes to heaven, blesses the loaves and fishes, and commands His disciples to distribute them. In the same manner ought you to look up to heaven, before you enjoy the benefits of God, "Who opens His hand and fills every living creature with blessing." (Ps. cxliv. 16.) Hence the virtuous and rational custom of saying grace before meals. Every thing that we enjoy, comes from God, and every action that we perform ought to be done with a feeling that we are in the sight of God. Hence, royal David sings, "Let the just feast and rejoice before God." (Ps. lxxvii. 4.)

## FRIDAY.

### **The Five Thousand, fed in the Desert.—II.**

I. The loaves, by the power of God, were multiplied in the hands of the disciples, so that although they were continually distributing the bread, they always found sufficient remaining. In the same manner, by the prayers of Elias, neither meal nor oil was wanting, although the present provision was daily spent. Who would not willingly serve so bountiful and powerful a Lord, "Who can

furnish a table in the wilderness," (Ps. lxxvii. 19) and Who can enable you to suck "honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone." (Deut. xxxii. 13.) He will never suffer those to want, who trust in Him.

II. "And they did all eat, and were filled." (Matt. xiv. 20.) The delights of this world may please and even fascinate us for a time, but they can never fill "the cravings of our immortal soul." The capacity of this immortal soul is greater than can be filled with any thing earthly and transitory. Being itself immortal, it can only be ultimately satisfied with imperishable goods. Christ alone can satisfy it. Hence the Prophet asks, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which doth not satisfy you." (Is. lv. 22.) Approach, therefore, to Christ, in order that you may be filled.

III. After all had been fed, Christ ordered His Apostles to collect what remained; and they collected more than had been originally distributed, viz.: "twelve full baskets of fragments." Thus God is accustomed to reward the charity of His servants, and to be liberal to the liberal. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him." (Prov. xix. 17.) Give, therefore, to your brother, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," in order that you may receive the like "into your bosom." (Luke, vi. 38.)

## SATURDAY.

### Christ flies, to avoid being made King.

I. "Then those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, this is the Prophet indeed."

(John vi. 14.) They were astonished at the prodigious multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and, therefore, resolved to make Christ their king. God performs greater miracles than this every day, by raising harvests from a few grains of corn, and thus supporting all living creatures. Why then do we not make Him the king of our hearts, and obey Him in all things? Why do we not address Him, "Thou art Thyself my king and my God." (Ps. xliii. 5.)

II. "When Jesus therefore perceived, that they would come to take Him by force, and make Him king, He fled into the mountain Himself alone." (John vi. 15.) Sovereignty was due to Christ, because He was the Son of God; it was due to His merits, and in consequence of the benefits, which He had bestowed on mankind; but He refused to accept of it, and when there was any question concerning it, He fled away and hid Himself. How few are there now in the world who would closely follow Christ's example, on a similar occasion. By His example Christ wishes to teach us to fly from honors, and to court humility. Examine your conscience on this point, and see whether you do not rather seek after such occupations as are attended with lustre and reputation, than follow the humble example of your Lord and master. See whether you do not at least prefer yourself to your companions or neighbors.

III. St. Matthew writes of Christ on this occasion: "He went up into the mountain alone, to pray." (Matt. xiv. 23.) He thus teaches us to have recourse to prayer when we are tempted by pride or ambition. It was His usual custom to retire from society to pray alone, not that He stood in need of prayer, as we do, since He always beheld the face of God by the beatific vision, but He wished to give us an example. Imitate Him therefore,

and join together the active and the contemplative life, as He did. "Let nothing," says Ecclesiasticus, "hinder thee from praying always." (Ecclus. xviii. 22.)

## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ the Good Samaritan.

"The Lord shall bind up the wounds of His people, and shall heal the stroke of the wound." (Is. xxx. 26.)

I. We read in the gospel of to-day, that a traveller fell among thieves; that they wounded him and left him half dead; and that a Samaritan passed by and bound up his wounds. (Luke x. 30.) By this man our first parent Adam is represented; the thieves are the infernal spirits, who, by inducing him to commit original sin, despoiled him, and in him all mankind, of all grace and other free gifts, and wounded him, as divines teach, in all his natural faculties. The four wounds of our nature are, according to St. Thomas, ignorance in the understanding, perversity in the will, weakness in the irascible power, and unlawful concupiscence in the concupiscible power. Such is the condition of all the descendants of Adam.

II. This pious Samaritan will visit you to-day in the Holy Eucharist, to bind up your wounds and to heal you. He will pour into them "wine springing forth virgins," (Zac. ix. 17) and the oil of His mercy with which He comforts sinners. He will apply His own precious flesh to your wounds, and unless you impose an impediment, He will enlighten your understanding, as the eyes of Jonathan were enlightened, (1 Kings xiv. 27) with the honey which he took. He will rectify your will, as the

lips of Isaias were purified by the coal taken from the altar. He will strengthen you to proceed in the service of God, as Elias was strengthened with the bread which enabled him to walk to the mountain of God, Horeb. Lastly, He will temper the heat of concupiscence, like the manna which lay "like unto the hoar frost on the ground." (Exod. xvi. 14.)

III. How ardently you ought to wish for the hour in which this kind Samaritan will visit you. Say, in your zeal for the happy moment, "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down" (Is. lxiv. 1); and with the prophet Jeremias, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." (Jer. xvii. 14.)

## MONDAY.

### Christ Stills the Tempest.

I. Christ embarked with His disciples in a vessel, in order to cross the lake, "and He was in the hinder part of the ship sleeping on a pillow." (Mark iv. 38; Matt. viii.; Luke viii.) Christ sleeps in order to show us that He was subject to human infirmities. In the meantime a storm rises, the boat is in danger, and the Apostles are alarmed. Thus, God frequently permits us to be harassed with temptations, and almost overwhelmed, whilst He in the meantime seems to sleep and leave us to ourselves, by delaying to give His particular assistance. He acts thus in order to teach us humility, and to force us to implore His assistance with more fervor.

II. The disciples, considering themselves in danger, "came to Him and awakened Him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish," and "Master, doth it not concern Thee



that we perish?" (Matt. viii. 25.) Such ought to be our filial confidence in God during the hour of trial; we ought to say with David, "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord; arise, and cast us not off to the end." (Ps. xliii. 23.) When Christ was awakened, He reprehends His disciples for their want of faith in Him. Examine if you have not given Him equal reason for reprehension.

III. "Then rising up, Christ commanded the winds and the sea; and there came a great calm." (Matt. viii. 26.) Thus, God's dominion extends over all creatures, and even irrational nature obeys Him. Man alone is refractory and disobedient to His commands, and obstinately deaf to His counsels. Reflect, that you among others have acted in this manner; resolve to correct your conduct, "and to-day, if you should hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv. 9.)

## **TUESDAY.**

### **Christ Walks on the Water.**

I. "Forthwith, Jesus obliged His disciples, to get up into the ship, and to go before Him over the water; He went up into a mountain alone to pray." (Matt. xiv. 22.) Another tempest arose, "and the ship in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves, and they labored in rowing." (Mark vi. 48.) Thus, as long as we exist in this world we are repeatedly exposed to temptations, which we must not neglect, but use all our endeavors to overcome, by having recourse to the spiritual arms of prayer and recollection. At last Christ came to His disciples, walking over the sea, to convince them of His power. He is always at hand to assist us, and to perform the

character of "a helper, in due time, in tribulation." (Ps. ix. 10.)

II. The disciples seeing Him walking on the waters exclaimed, "It is an apparition." It too frequently happens, that men consider Christ as a mere apparition, interior inspirations the mere effects of a melancholy disposition, and solid virtue, nothing but idle superstition and weakness of mind. Others consider their own crude imaginations, the effect of Christ's presence; believe their foolish ideas are revelations; that their passions are virtues; that their anger and malice are zeal; and seek their own private interest, under the cover of the greater glory of God. The virtuous soul avoids both extremes, and follows the counsel of the Apostle, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." (1 John iv. 1.)

III. Consider the words of Christ, "It is I, be not afraid." It is I, who so lately fed five thousand in the wilderness; it is I, who appeased a similar tempest; it is I, who command the stormy winds and the raging sea; it is I, who am now walking on that untractable element; be not therefore afraid. Hear Him address the same language to you, when you are assaulted by temptation, and rejoice that you have a helper so powerful as He is, and a refuge in all your distresses and miseries.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Peter Walks on the Water.**

I. As soon as St. Peter understood that it was Christ who was walking on the water, his fervor was immediately inflamed, and he felt an ardent desire of being with

Him. "Lord, if it be Thou," he exclaims, "bid me come to Thee upon the waters." (Matt. xiv. 28.) A true lover cannot bear to be separated from the object of his love, and overcomes every difficulty and every danger that prevent their mutual communication. We may readily apply to St. Peter on this occasion the words of the Canticle, "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it." (Cant. viii. 7.) Examine whether your love of God be of this character, or whether you do not rather suffer yourself to be withdrawn from His service, when the least difficulty presents itself.

II. When St. Peter was told to come, he immediately threw himself into the sea: "But seeing the wind strong he was afraid, and when he began to sink, he cried out saying, Lord save me." (Matt. xiv. 30.) Thus God sometimes permits us almost to sink under our temptations, in order that we may be induced to call upon Him with increased fervor. At length He stretched out His hand to Peter, and would not suffer him to sink. So He will act toward us, according to the Psalmist, "When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under him." (Ps. xxxvi. 24.) And, "He sent from on high and took me, and received me out of many waters." (Ps. xvii. 17.)

III. Consider the mystical sense of walking on the sea. "The world is like a sea," says St. Augustine; "if you love God, you walk upon it, but if you love this world the sea will swallow you up." Examine, whether you love God or the world; for it is a dreadful thing to be swallowed up by this sea. Take care then to walk over and trample on it, and remember the remark of the same Saint, "Every man's inordinate desire is his tempest."

**THURSDAY.****Peter's Confession.**

I. "Jesus came into the confines of Cæsarea Philippi, and he asked His disciples saying; Whom do men say, that the Son of Man is?" (Matt. xvi. 13.) It is sometimes good to know what men say of us, in order that we may know and correct the defects, which have been discovered in our conduct, and that we may attempt to realize and perfect what has been the subject of their commendation. The desire of knowing the opinions of mankind, in our regard, however, frequently proceeds from vanity and vain-glory, and is therefore often dangerous. Observe, how Christ every-where calls Himself the "Son of Man," though He is the only begotten Son of God, whilst those, who pretend to be His followers, pay so much attention to their privileges and titles of honor!

II. The Apostles' answer, "Some say Thou art John the Baptist, and others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." (Matt. xvi. 14.) They did not tell Him, that others called Him a drunkard, a glutton, and other opprobrious names, to teach us, that slanderous reports ought not to be uttered before our brother, to spare his feelings. Observe, how far men failed in their esteem of Christ, although His miracles clearly evinced His divinity. Do not, therefore, on your part wonder, if your neighbors or companions undervalue you, or err, in believing you worse than you are. Be content to be considered such in the sight of God, as you really are, and no more; for God sees the secrets of hearts.

III. Consider the words of Christ, "But whom do you

say that I am?" He proposes this question to His apostles, because they had long been brought up in His school, and therefore, ought to know much more of their Master than the rest of mankind. "Simon Peter, answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Not the Son of the living God by adoption as others are, but by nature and essence the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. Rejoice at the divinity of your Saviour and Lord, and excite yourself both to confess Him in your thoughts and actions, and to bring others to His knowledge and service; say with the Psalmist, "I will declare Thy name to my brethren." (Ps. xxi. 23.)

#### FRIDAY.

### **Christ Promises the Primacy to Peter.**

I. When Peter had made this signal profession of faith, Christ said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in Heaven." (Matt. xiv. 17.) Jesus pronounces Him blessed, because to know Christ is the foundation of a happy life. Simon signifies the same as obedient, Barjona the son of a dove or of grace (as some commentators explain the passage). Be you therefore obedient, and with dove-like simplicity endeavor to comply with Divine grace. Reject what flesh and blood say to the contrary, and attend to the inspirations of your heavenly Father, and you will be happy.

II. Consider the reward, which Peter received; "Thou art Peter" (which in the language that Christ spoke signified a rock), "and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against

it." (Matt. xvi. 17, 18.) Observe, 1. Christ gives him a name suitable to his office. 2. Upon him He founds His Church militant, and appoints him the visible head. 3. He promises infallibility to this Church, so that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. 4. He promises him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; that is, the key of knowledge, to determine matters of faith without error, and the key of power to remit sin. Rejoice for these privileges granted to the chief pastor, for your particular good, and the general good of the whole Church.

III. In what a miserable state are those who deny the supremacy of St. Peter, and will not build upon the rock, which cannot fail, but ground their hopes of eternal salvation on the sand of their own private, fallible, and treacherous judgments! Endeavor as much as you can to bring all men to this rock of salvation; at least pray, that all may acknowledge the one Shepherd, and be members of the one sheepfold; but first prepare yourself by solid virtue.

## SATURDAY.

### Christ Reprehends Peter.

I. After St. Peter's confession of his Master's divinity, our Lord charged His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ (Matt. xvi. 20), both to give us an example of great humility and to avoid ostentation. Besides, the proper time for the revelation of this mystery, had not yet arrived. Immediately afterward He began to treat of His passion. "From that time forth Jesus began to show His disciples, that He

must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things." Follow His example on this occasion, and the advice of the Wise Man, "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils." (Ecclus. xi. 27.) Learn besides, that it is not enough to acknowledge Christ's divinity, but that it is requisite you should imitate Him in His passion.

II. St. Peter hearing this, and being zealous for his Master, took Christ aside and said to Him, "Lord be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." (Matt. xvi. 23.) This was an effect of zeal, but the zeal was indiscreet and "not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2), for Peter did not yet understand, how glorious Christ's ignominy would be. Examine whether you be not sometimes influenced by this preposterous zeal.

III. Christ immediately reprehends him, "Go after Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me, because thou dost not relish the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." Reflect how dangerous it is to embrace the things that are of men only, such as honors, riches and pleasures, and not the things of God, such as are labors, sufferings, and crosses. Examine whether you feel a relish in spiritual things; or whether you at least attempt to feel it.

## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ a Priest.

"Go show thyself to the priest." (Matt. viii. 4.)

I. Christ in the gospel of to-day told the ten lepers, "Go show yourselves to the priests; and it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed." (Luke xvii. 14.) As

there are several kinds of leprosies in regard to the body, for some are but light and affect only the skin, whilst others affect the body and are mortal, so are there several kinds of spiritual leprosies, or sins. We are all, in some degree at least, affected with spiritual leprosy. Imagine, therefore, that your soul is deeply affected with this disorder, and with "Naaman the Syrian" (4 Kings v.) earnestly seek for some prophet to purify you.

II. The ancient law of God commanded, that, "If the stroke of the leprosy be in a man he shall be brought to a priest" (Lev. xiii. 9), to be pronounced unclean, and separated from the others; but in the new law he is brought to the priest to be purified. Our high priest is Christ our Lord, according to the Psalmist, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Ps. cix. 4.) How ardently therefore ought you to desire to be introduced in the Eucharist, to this priest who will not employ water as Eliseus did, but with His own precious blood, "will cleanse our conscience from dead works." (Heb. ix. 14.)

III. In order that you may be perfectly purified, you must imitate the lepers in the gospel. 1. You must go forth to meet Christ. 2. You must stand afar off, that is, you must humbly acknowledge your own unworthiness. 3. You must lift up your voice, by fervent and persevering prayer. 4. You must pray for mercy as they did; "Jesus Master, have mercy on us." Lastly, you must follow the injunctions, and counsels of your spiritual guides and physicians, "and do whatsoever the priests of the Levitical race, shall teach thee." (Deut. xxiv. 8.)



**MONDAY.****The Transfiguration.—I.**

I. Christ vouchsafed to manifest His glory to His Apostles in His transfiguration, in order to confirm them in the faith; to encourage them to carry their cross, to which He had lately exhorted them, and to give them beforehand a taste and glimpse of heavenly joys, which are prepared for the virtuous. He led them to the top of a high mountain, in a sequestered place, to teach us, that we must retire from the cares of the world and ascend the mountain of perfection, if we wish to contemplate the face and glory of God.

II. Christ would have but few witnesses of His glory, viz., only three of his disciples, but all kinds of persons were witnesses of His ignominies and His sufferings. Therefore, on the cross He said by the mouth of His prophet, "O all ye, who pass by the way, attend and see." (Lam. i. 12.) By these three disciples are prefigured the three virtues that accompany contemplation and prayer, and concur to the soul's transfiguration; in Peter faith, in James hope, and in John charity. Examine what progress you make in these necessary virtues.

III. "And whilst He prayed, the appearance of His countenance was altered." (Luke ix. 29.) Our Lord was transfigured whilst He was praying, in order to teach us, that prayer transfigures and beautifies the soul of man, so as sometimes to have a visible effect on the body. Thus the "face of Moses was horned from the conversation of the Lord." (Exod. xxxiv. 29.) Beseech our Lord to alter and change you into another man, that is, to make you holy, in order that having divested your-

self of all bad habits, you may become conformable to His divine image and likeness. Frequently entertain yourself in prayer, and "Come ye to the Lord, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded." (Ps. xxxiii. 6.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Transfiguration.—II.

I. "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow." (Matt. xvii. 2.) The Evangelist has no other more exalted terms of natural comparison, but it is certain, that these terms were far inferior to the brightness of His face, and the whiteness of His garments. Congratulate your Lord, and His sacred humanity for this array of glory, which was always indeed, His due, but of which, He divested Himself for your salvation. Rejoice that your beloved is "white, and ruddy, chosen out of thousands." (Cant. v. 11.)

II. There appeared with Him, "Moses and Elias," two chief lights of ancient law, to show mankind, that both Moses and the prophets gave testimony of Christ. Conceive what was their joy, at beholding their Redeemer, the long-wished for of all nations, and the desire of the eternal hills, whose coming, they themselves had so often foretold. Recollect, that they, like Christ, had observed a fast of forty days, and were therefore made companions with Him in glory.

III. "They spoke of His decease, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 31.) Christ in the height of His glory conversed on His ignominious and bitter passion. This fact teaches you, what importance

He attached to His sufferings, and with what affection He meditated on them. His example was closely followed by His Apostle, who wrote, "God forbid, that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.) In the zenith of prosperity, never suffer your mind to be so elated, as to exclude the thoughts of dying.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### The Transfiguration.—III.

I. The Apostles were overjoyed at so glorious a scene. "Lord," immediately exclaimed St. Peter, "it is good for us to be here." (Matt. xvii. 4.) He wished to fix his dwelling place on that mount, and to make three tents, one for Christ, and another for each of his companions. Conceive what heaven must be, if only one drop of heavenly joy could so far inebriate the minds of the Apostles, as to make them wish to remain there forever, forgetful of everything else in the world. What an ocean of joy must heaven be! "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.)

II. The voice of the Divinity was immediately heard; "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." (Matt. xvii. 5.) Ponder each word of this emphatic sentence, and reflect how Christ is the only begotten Son of the eternal Father, con-substantial and co-eternal with Him, and equally immense and omnipotent, as He is. Examine whether you be accustomed to hear Him, when He excites you to higher perfection, to a contempt of the world and to self-abnegation. Say at

least from this time, with young Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Kings iii. 10.)

III. When the vision had ceased, our Lord forbade His disciples to divulge it to any one. "Tell the vision to no man," He said, "till the Son of man be risen from the dead." (Matt. xvii. 5.) By this command He wishes to inculcate the necessity of humility, and to teach us that extraordinary favors of God ought to be kept secret and not divulged, unless some great necessity or spiritual good requires it, and even then, that we ought to acknowledge them to be the gratuitous gifts of heaven, and not merited by ourselves.

## THURSDAY.

### Petition of the Sons of Zebedee.—I.

I. "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee." (Matt. xx. 20.) The mother presents herself to offer a petition for her sons, to obtain an honor to which they aspired, and they made use of her intercession as a cloak to their ambitious views. Thus mankind often attempt to gain some object of inclination or passion under false pretext, and often make use of the interposition of others to accomplish their own designs. Observe how this mother comes in an humble and suppliant manner and presents her petition in the act of adoring Christ. "Ambition," says St. Ambrose, "is first servile, in order that it may afterward domineer; it stoops to mean offices, in order that it may be afterward served with honor."

II. The petition of this misguided mother was: "Say that these, my two sons, may sit, the one on Thy right

hand and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." It is unfortunately natural for every one to be ambitious for the first place. This principle hurled the angels from heaven. "I will ascend into heaven," said the apostate Lucifer, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." (Is. xiv. 13.) The same ambition lost Paradise for our first parents. "You shall be as gods" (Gen. iii. 5), said the tempter to Eve. This same passion attacks the Apostles. Examine if it have any influence on your conduct. How much safer is it to follow the example of Christ, and to be content with the lowest places!

III. Consider the answer of Christ, "You know not what you ask." Those who desire the vanities and the honors of this world certainly do not know what they ask. He continues, "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink" (Matt. xx. 22), that is, can you join me in my bitter passion? Christ insinuates by this question that our future glory will be proportionate to our sufferings in this life. Our seats in heaven will approach to that of Christ in the same proportion as our sufferings approach to His afflictions. Encourage yourself to drink deep of this chalice of sufferings, for, "as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolations." (2 Cor. i. 7.)

## FRIDAY.

### Petition of the Sons of Zebedee.—II.

I. These two Apostles seemed ready to drink the chalice which was proposed to them. "They say to Him, we can." (Matt. xx. 22.) This spirit of alacrity may proceed from different motives; it may proceed first from ambition, which prompts a man to refuse no

labor that may gain an honorable object. It may be, secondly, the consequence of a rash fervor, which does not know the difficulties that it undertakes to surmount. It may be in the third place the effect of Divine grace, according to the declaration of St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." (Phil. iv. 13.) Be ashamed of your negligence in laboring for the kingdom of heaven, because you will not exert yourself as much to obtain that happiness and glory as worldly men do to gain some empty object of ambition or folly. You often say, "I cannot do it," when nothing is wanting but resolution and good will.

II. Christ, observing this readiness in them, remarked: "Of My chalice, indeed, you shall drink, but to sit on My right or left hand is not mine to give you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father." He did not dissuade them from using their endeavors to merit the highest seats of glory, but He gave them to understand that those seats were not distributed from motives of favor or temporal relationship. The glory of heaven, which each one enjoys, is proportionate to his merits, for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 35), and "He will render to every man according to his works." (Matt. xvi. 27.)

III. A difference exists between worldly precedence and that which is peculiar to the school of Christ. "The princes of the Gentiles," He says, "lord it over them; it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister." He confirms this by His own example, for He continues: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matt. xx. 25, 28.) Let it therefore be your ambition to seek the lowest places on all occasions if you desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## SATURDAY.

**Who is Greatest in Heaven?**

I. "At that hour the disciples came to Jesus saying, who thinkest Thou is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matt. xviii. 1.) A little before this there had been a contention among them, "which of them should be the greatest" (Mark ix. 34), and now each of them wishes to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Thus ambition insinuates itself even into spiritual things and persons, and hence, they ask the question, who is to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps some may erroneously think that the rich and powerful in this world ought to obtain that honor. But Jesus Christ will undeceive them.

II. "Jesus calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said, Amen, I say to you, unless ye become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself, as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 3.) Consider what is to be inferred from *becoming as a little child*. "Brethren," writes St. Paul, "do not become children in sense, but in malice be children, and in sense be perfect." (1. Cor. xiv. 20.) A child prefers himself to no one, arrogates nothing to himself, is affectionate to all, loves his parents and suffers himself to be governed by them. Act therefore in this manner if you desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, which leadeth to life." (Matt. vii. 14.) Humble yourself, therefore, and become little in your own eyes, and you will be able to enter.

III. How grievous the offence they commit, who scandalize the little ones of Christ! "It were better," says Christ, "that a millstone were hanging about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii. 6.) Beware, therefore, of inducing any one to sin by your example, for the offended majesty of God "will require his blood at thy hand." (Ezech. iii. 18.)

#### FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

##### **Christ your Lord.**

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him only." (Deut. vi. 13.)

I. "No man can serve two masters." (Matt. vi. 24.) God is our only true and lawful Lord; "I am the Lord," He says by Isaias, "and there is no other." (xlv. 18.) "All souls are Mine: as the soul of the father, so also, the soul of the son is Mine." (Ezech. xviii. 4.) No master has so perfect a right to his servant as God has to you. You belong to Him under the titles of creation, preservation, and redemption; you belong to Him too by voluntary subjection in baptism. Rejoice that your Lord and Master is so exalted and so powerful, for as St. Ambrose remarks, "It is an honor to be a servant to an exalted Lord."

II. Dominion over a thing infers the right of disposing of that thing, as the proprietor thinks proper. Reflect how often you have violated this right, that God possesses over you, by not permitting Him to dispose of you as He pleases. Worse than this, you have frequently stood in open rebellion to Him, by your sins. Oh how often have you embraced the interests of the Devil, His



capital and sworn enemy! "Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee." (Deut. xxxii. 18.) Ponder this expression of God and be confounded.

III. Your Lord and Sovereign will visit you to-day, in the Holy Eucharist, to take a fuller and more perfect possession of you; for although He does not stand in need of you, He wishes you to belong entirely to Him. "The Lord thy God, thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv. 10.) Renounce, therefore, every connection and league with the devil, the world, and the flesh. Present your heart to Him again, ask His pardon for your former disloyalty, and permit Him to dispose of you as He pleases in everything. In fine let it be your future care to please Him alone, in your every thought, word, and deed, for "no man can serve two masters."

## CONVERSIONS AND CURES,

WROUGHT BY OUR SAVIOUR.

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### MONDAY.

#### Conversion of Magdalene.—I.

I. "And behold a woman in the city who was a sinner." (Luke vii. 37.) She was a sinner against the virtue of purity, although it be not specified, because, as the Apostle observes, the very name ought not to be pronounced among Christians, so odious is the vice in those, who pretend to virtue and sanctity. It is probable she heard our Lord preach; and being touched to the heart with repentance, she did not wait for the opportunity of time or place, but immediately "rushed into the banquet," as

St. Augustine observes. Wherefore, on your part, "delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day." (Ecclus. v. 8.)

II. In the fervor of her penance she displays four eminent virtues, in which we must imitate her. 1. Her faith in the divinity of Christ, and His power to forgive sin, was most lively. 2. Her humility equalled her faith; for she willingly suffered confusion, for "she stood behind at His feet," because she considered herself unworthy of His sight. 3. Her love was extreme, and she expressed it by tears, by embracing our Lord's feet, and by anointing them. 4. She had a sovereign contempt of the world; she made her precious ointments, her very hair, and eyes subservient to her penance, because they had before been the instruments of her vanity and sin, and she wished to punish herself in those things, by which she had sinned.

III. Consider the rash judgment of the Pharisees in condemning Christ for suffering Himself to be touched by a sinful woman. Learn hence, that there is no action, however holy, that is not liable to be censured: so true it is that "the sons of men are liars in their balances," (Ps. lxi. 10) that is, in their judgments. Accustom yourself to disregard the enemies of true piety and solid devotion.

## TUESDAY.

### Conversion of Magdalene.—II.

I. Consider Christ's wisdom in reproving the Pharisee. He reprimands him with mildness and sweetness, as all men in authority ought to do, in order to avoid giving

useless offence. He couches His reproof in a parable of two debtors to one creditor. God is our creditor, and we are all His debtors, some more so, and others less; and we have no means of satisfying our Creditor, but by the merits of Christ. The greater, therefore, the debt is, which is forgiven us, the greater is our obligation of love and gratitude. Examine your debts, and consequently your obligations to God.

II. "Dost thou see this woman?" (Luke vii. 44.) He confounds the Pharisee and our pride by the example of a sinful woman. She acknowledges the favor done to her by the remission of her great debt, and shows much more love than those who neglecting their less debts, are cold in their affections. Often ask yourself this question, "Dost thou see this woman?" and be confounded for being so inferior to her in love of God, and works of penance, often having, perhaps, received greater favors than she had. Take care that you be not of the number of those, to whom Christ addresses the terrible sentence; "The publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matt. xxi. 31.)

III. "Thy sins are forgiven thee." What was her joy when she heard those consoling words? Ponder on the efficacy of contrition, which in a moment blots out all the sins of former life. Take care to excite this contrition in your mind, especially when you approach the sacrament of penance. As you have followed her in sinning, follow her in repenting. Say with the Psalmist, "I will confess against myself my iniquities to the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin." (Ps. xxxi. 5.)

**WEDNESDAY.****Conversion of the Samaritan Woman.—I.**

I. "Jesus being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." (John iv. 6.) Like a good shepherd our Lord travelled on foot seeking for His lost sheep, and among other corporal miseries admitted weariness and thirst. But observe with what patience He endured them. He sat down by the fountain, foreseeing what would happen, not so much to rest Himself as to take an occasion of benefiting others. Thus the Divine "wisdom forerunneth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself to them." (Wis. vi. 14.) How often has she attempted to anticipate you, and you have disregarded her!

II. While He was sitting by the fountain, a woman came to draw water. Christ first addresses her by the words, "Give Me to drink." She refuses, and asks; "How dost Thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink?" Thus many reject Jesus Christ, when He moves them by His interior grace, and wishes to be refreshed by their virtues. Christ, however, did not desist from helping this sinner, but remarked, "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, 'give Me to drink,' thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.)

III. Consider the excellence of this living water, which is Divine grace, and which Christ promises to His faithful servants. "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever." It quenches, therefore, forever, the thirst of the soul, and satisfies it. The soul then no longer thirsts after earthly waters, that

is, the pleasures of this world. It becomes a fountain of all good to the soul, ever flowing and giving merit to our actions. "It springs up to everlasting life" (John iv. 14), elevating our thoughts to heaven and heavenly joys, of which it is a pledge. Say, therefore, with the Samaritan woman, "Give me this water, that I may not thirst."

#### THURSDAY.

### Conversion of the Samaritan Woman.—II.

I. Consider the wonderful goodness of our Lord in manifesting Himself to the sinful woman, when she spoke of the Messiah: "I am He," He said, "Who am speaking to thee." (John iv. 26.) Ponder the efficacy of her faith; she immediately leaves the vessel in which she intended to draw water, and runs back into the city to induce others to believe as well as herself. "Come and see," she said, "a Man who hath told me all the things that ever I did." Such is the fervor of true zeal; it is always active, and always wishes to gain subjects to Christ. If you wish, therefore, to be inflamed with true zeal, throw away every earthly affection and seek the greater glory of God.

II. When the woman was gone, the disciples offered Christ something to eat; but He, being intent on the conversion of the Samaritans, observed, "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." Learn, hence, to prefer the spiritual good of your neighbor, to your own temporal concerns. Would to God, that your meat and drink, your delight and only pleasure, was to do the will of your Heavenly Father!

III. Many of the Samaritans, moved by the woman's

words, came to Christ and were converted. "We now believe," they said to her, "not for thy saying, for we ourselves have heard Him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." Rejoice at your Saviour's being manifested to those men, and wish that the whole world may come to the knowledge of Him. Exert yourself to the utmost, in endeavoring to bring as many as you can to Him. "If you walk towards God," says St. Gregory, "endeavor not to come to Him alone without company."

## FRIDAY.

### **The Woman taken in Adultery.**

I. The Pharisees were continually seeking occasions of entrapping Christ in conversation, and on this endeavored to abuse His meekness. They, therefore, bring to Him a woman taken in adultery, with the intention, that if He gave sentence that she ought to be dismissed, they might accuse Him of being a corrupter of the law. The devil is constantly occupied in laying snares for us in that virtue, in which we most excel. The zealous he endeavors to provoke to anger, the humble to dejection and pusillanimity, and the meek to too much indulgence. But "there is no counsel against the Lord," (Prov. xxi. 30) and God "catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked." (Tob. v. 13.)

II. "Jesus stooping down, wrote with his finger on the ground." (John viii. 6.) He thus declined giving a sentence, which might create contention. Hence the Apostle writes: "No man being a soldier to God, entangleth himself in worldly business." (2 Tim. ii. 4.) He acted

thus too, in order to teach us to act prudently, and not with precipitation when the condemnation of our neighbor is in question. The Pharisees still urged Him; and He lifted up Himself and said to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This was a most wise decision; He neither condemned nor acquitted her, but attempted to move her accusers to compunction for their own sins, and pity for others. "Be ye merciful, as your Heavenly Father is also merciful." (Luke vi. 36.)

III. The Pharisees went away one by one, and left the woman alone, repentant for her sin, and probably with interior faith, expecting absolution from Christ. Christ understanding from her, that no one had condemned her, said, "Neither will I condemn thee, go and now sin no more." (John viii. 11.) Admire the riches of God's goodness, patience, and longanimity in bringing you and others to penance. How often has He said to you, "now sin no more," and yet you have disobeyed Him. "A man, that fasteth for his sins, and doeth the same again, what doth his humbling himself profit him? Who will hear his prayer?" (Ecclus. xxxiv. 31.)

## SATURDAY.

### The Woman of Canaan.

I. A woman of Canaan, a Gentile, came to our Lord to obtain the cure of her daughter. Her prayer for this favor was most perfect; her faith was great; she confessed Christ to be the son of David. Her reverence was profound, for "she fell down at His feet." (Mark vii. 25.) Her charity was tender; she did not pray for her-

self, but for her daughter. Her prayer was earnest, for she cried out after our Lord. Lastly, her prayer was constant, for although often repulsed, she persisted in her entreaty. Let this be the model of your prayers.

II. At first Christ seemed to address her harshly. "It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs." (Matt. xv. 26.) He thus wished to exercise her virtue and to try her perseverance. God often acts in the same manner with us, because, as St. Gregory remarks, "He loves to be entreated, He wishes to be forced, and desires to be overcome by importunities." Remark, admire, and imitate the woman's humility. Let your prayers be always attended by this virtue, for "the prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall penetrate the clouds, and he will not depart till the Most High behold." (Ecclus. xxxv. 19.)

III. Christ yielded at length to the woman's pious importunity, after having first commended her faith. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt." (Matt. xv. 28.) Perhaps your soul like this woman's daughter is afflicted with an evil spirit. He is afflicted with this spirit, who yields to troubles and temptations, but he who overcomes them is harassed to his greater merit. Beg, therefore, courage and strength to conquer them, and pray as this woman did, in order that "it may be done to thee as thou wilt."



**FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.****Christ the Life of your Soul.**

"Love the Lord thy God, and obey His voice and adhere to Him, for He is thy life and the length of thy days." (Deut. xxx. 20.)

I. It is recorded in the gospel of to-day, that Christ raised a young man from death to life. He is the true life of your soul according to the expression of St. John, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live." (John xi. 25.) "As the body dies," writes St. Augustine, "when it is abandoned by the soul, which is its life, so does the soul die when by sin it loses God, Who is its Life." Ponder the benefit of spiritual life, by comparing it with that of the body, for the soul, when deprived of God's grace, is in the sight of God, what a deformed, loathsome and useless carcass is in the eyes of men.

II. Christ "with Whom is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxv. 10), gives life to dead souls, by the Sacrament of Penance, and preserves and increases that life by the Holy Eucharist. "He that eateth Me," He says, "the same shall also live by Me," and, "he that eateth this bread shall live forever." (John vi. 58.) You ought, therefore, to expect with a longing desire, the sacred hour in which this fountain of life will visit you. Say with the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God, my soul hath thirsted after the strong living God." (Ps. xli. 2.)

III. This spiritual life is only bestowed on those who ask it with great devotion. "He asked life of Thee and

Thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever." (Ps. xx. 5.) The life of the body is known to exist by its motion and operation; in the same manner the life of the soul is discovered by its works, that is, by its imitation of Christ. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought, himself also, to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.)

### MONDAY.

#### **Conversion of Zacheus.—I.**

I. "Behold there was a man, by name Zacheus, and this was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich, and he sought to see Jesus." (Luke xix. 2.) The desire of finding Jesus is rare in the minds of the rich, but this desire was the beginning of Zacheus's conversion. "Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her; the beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline." (Wis. vi. 13.) Examine whether you feel this desire of perfection, and if you do not, take care to excite it.

II. "And he could not see Jesus for the crowd," he therefore ascended a tree. In his search after salvation, though a man of authority, he disregarded the ridicule and scoffs of the rabble. Perhaps you are not able to see Christ and understand His divine mysteries, in consequence of the crowd of worldly thoughts which fill your mind. Retire therefore, from them by prayer and mortification, and like Zacheus ascend the tree. This tree is the cross, which is "a folly to the Gentiles," for, as St. Gregory writes, "those, who through humility choose that which is folly to the world, arise to a feeling contemplation of the wisdom of God Himself."

III. The charity and meekness of Jesus Christ prompted Him to grant Zacheus more than he wished, for He not only permitted Himself to be seen by him but also invited him to His conversation and familiarity: "Zacheus," He said, "make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house." He tells him to "make haste," because the grace of the Holy Ghost knows no slow delays. He mentions "to-day," because we ought to take advantage of the present time; for to-morrow may not be our own. "If to-day you should hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Ps. xciv. 8.)

## TUESDAY.

### Conversion of Zacheus.—II.

I. Zacheus immediately obeyed Christ's call, "and made haste and came down, and received Him with joy." (Luke xix. 6.) Such ought to be your obedience; when Christ calls you by His secret inspiration, you should open the door of your heart as soon as you hear Him knock, lest, if you make any delay, He turn aside from you, as did the spouse in the Canticles, and pass away. Observe how those who stood by murmured, saying, "that He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner." (Luke xix. 7.) Learn hence, that the most holy actions are found fault with by the malicious. They did not understand the zeal of our Lord, "Who came to seek and to save that which was lost."

II. Zacheus was soon converted by his conversation with Christ, and immediately protested, "Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Here the rich man despoils himself of his riches, partly for the benefit

of the poor, and partly to make restitution for his injustices. He overcomes himself in a most difficult encounter, the abandoning of riches; but "the things which are impossible with men, are possible with God." (Luke xviii. 27.) Examine whether you have as yet overcome yourself, at least in divesting yourself of the desire of wealth, and particularly in renouncing your own will.

III. Christ approved of the piety of Zacheus; "this day," He said, "salvation is come to thy house" (Luke xix. 9), that is, to the whole family of which he was the head. Such is the effect of good example in masters of families and rulers. Entreat our Lord to produce the same salvation in your soul, especially when He visits you during the time of Mass, either by sacramental or spiritual communion.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Christ cures the Centurion's Servant.—I.**

I. The servant of the centurion having fallen sick, his master was anxious for him, and sent intercessors to Christ, saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented." (Matt. viii. 6.) Observe the master's goodness and care for his servant, and ponder the efficacy of the prayers of such masters; remark, also, his strong faith, for he believed that Christ although absent, could effect the cure. Learn hence, to perform works of charity even to your inferiors. "If thou have a faithful servant," says the Wise Man, "let him be to thee as thy own soul, treat him as a brother," (Ecclus. xxxiii. 31.) Meditate deeply on this injunction of the Holy Ghost.

II. Christ's charity and goodness induced Him to say immediately, "I will come and heal him." (Matt. viii. 7.) He offered more than the centurion asked; to wit, to come in person; whilst the centurion only wished to hear a word from Him, which would operate, he believed, an effectual cure. "Let mankind be ashamed of their backwardness," writes St. Augustine, "for God is more ready to give than we to receive." On another occasion, Christ was requested to cure the son of a ruler, but refused to visit him in person, whilst on this occasion, without being requested, He offers His personal service to a servant. "To destroy our pride, He does this," as St. Gregory remarks, "because we do not so much consider the nature of men" (which is the same in all), "as their honors or riches."

III. The centurion hearing that Christ intended to come Himself, sent a person to meet Him, and to say to Him, "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy Thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore, neither did I think myself worthy to come to Thee; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed." (Luke vii. 6.) Ponder the great humility of this man, and learn that men may be humble in any situation of life. He deemed himself unworthy to receive Christ under his roof, but he had already received Him in his heart. Do not fail to imitate him.

#### THURSDAY.

### Christ Cures the Centurion's Servant.—II.

I. Consider the centurion's description of himself; "I also am a man, subject to authority, having under me

soldiers, and I say to one, go and he goeth, and to my servant do this, and he doeth it." (Luke vii. 8.) His meaning was, if I, who am but an inferior officer, subject to higher authority, can nevertheless command my soldiers and servants, and be obeyed, how much more will all creation be obedient to You, its Creator and Governor? This was an honorable confession of Christ's power. Rejoice at His greatness, and be confounded that servants obey their temporal masters with more promptness, than you obey God, or His vicegerents.

II. Christ having heard these expressions, praised the faith of the centurion and preferred it to that of the Jews, although the centurion was a Gentile. "I have not found," He says, "so great faith in Israel" (Matt. viii. 10), "and I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness." The children of the kingdom of Heaven were, formerly, the Jews, but they are now outcasts, because they would not obey the call of God; but Christians are children of that kingdom in a special manner, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) Let us therefore, act in such manner as to deserve this honor; "Hold fast that, which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Apoc. iii. 11.)

III. The request of the centurion was granted; "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." The Psalmist says, "The Lord will do the will of them, that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer." (Ps. cxliv. 19.) Perhaps you possess a will, spiritually like the centurion's servant, that is, slothful and sluggish. Imitate, therefore, the fervor and humility of this centurion, and by means of your spiritual friends, that is, the angels and saints, beg that God would cure you. Especially when you go to communion, use the words of the centurion,

“Lord, I am not worthy, that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.” (Luke vii. 6.)

#### FRIDAY.

### **Cure of Peter's Mother-in-Law.**

I. Christ having entered into St. Peter's house, found his mother-in-law lying sick of a fever; but his disciples “besought Him for her.” (Luke iv. 38.) Observe the charity of the disciples in interceding for their neighbors, and the efficacy of their prayers; for the woman was immediately cured. All of us labor under some spiritual fever, caused by the heat of concupiscence or some unlawful passion. “Our fever is covetousness,” says St. Ambrose, “our fever is lust, our fever is ambition.” Examine under what spiritual ailment you labor, and have recourse to the Apostles as your intercessors.

II. “Standing over her, He commanded the fever, and it left her.” He did not employ the ordinary means to destroy the fever, but to show His Divine power, He exercised command over it. Thus He commanded the winds and the sea and the infernal spirits, and they obeyed Him. As the members of the body obey the soul, and are subservient to it, so do all the things of creation obey God. “He spoke, and they were made; He commanded and they were created.” (Ps. cxlviii. 5.) Do not yourself be an exemption to this rule of universal obedience.

III. When St. Peter's mother-in-law was cured, “immediately rising she ministered to them.” She did not allege weakness after sickness, but immediately began to labor, like the deserving woman in the Proverbs; “She hath girded her loins with strength, and strengthened

her arm." (Prov. xxi. 17.) Spiritual activity is a certain mark that the soul is cured of its diseases. Examine your conscience, and judge it by this rule.

## SATURDAY.

### Cure of the Ruler's Son.

I. "There came to Him a certain ruler, whose son was sick at Capharnaum and prayed Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." (John iv. 46.) Remark how advantageous corporal infirmities are for they force us to have recourse to God. Unless his son had been afflicted with sickness, perhaps the ruler had never been brought to Christ. It is related of Manasses, "that after he was in distress he prayed to the Lord his God, and Manasses knew that the Lord was God." (2 Par. xxxiii. 12, 13.) Do not fail, therefore, to consider corporal infirmities as blessings of God and incitements to virtue. "Their infirmities," says the Psalmist, "were multiplied, afterward they made haste." (Ps. xv. 4.)

II. In answer Christ reprehends those, who wish to see miracles from motives of curiosity, or incredulity. He refused besides to go to the house of the ruler, because we ought not to prescribe to God the means or manner of assisting us. He nevertheless cures this young man, although absent, the more to manifest His power and strengthen our faith in it. He is the Divine Being, "who commands the saving of Jacob." (Ps. xliii. 5.) Learn hence not to wish for miracles, visions, or extraordinary favors of God, but to commit yourself entirely to His Divine providence. Beseech Him, if you be not worthy to receive Him under your roof by Holy Com-



munion, at least, to "send thee help from the sanctuary and defend thee out of Sion." (Ps. xix. 3.)

III. "The man believed the word, which Jesus said to him, and himself believed and his whole house." Thus, his son received corporal health, and he, and the whole family spiritual life. Observe how Christ adds favors to favors. Remarking the efficacy of prayer, do not fail to perform that duty in the best manner that you can. St. Chrysostom says it is never an unseasonable time to pray.

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ the Guest of your Soul.

"Let the king come to the banquet I have prepared—to-morrow I will open my mind to the king." (Esther v. 8.)

I. We read in the gospel of the present Sunday, that Christ entered into the house of a certain Pharisee on the Sabbath, to eat bread. (Luke 14.) He is also the Guest of your soul, and He will enter it to-day, in order to be entertained by you. "If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Apoc. iii. 20.) Consider, therefore, attentively the greatness and dignity of your Guest, and conceive those words of the Evangelist addressed to you, "Make ready My supper, and gird thyself." (Luke xvii. 1.)

II. This Divine Guest, in the language of St. Ambrose, "feeds upon our virtues." He is particularly pleased with the virtue of humility, and therefore, while He was at table to-day with the Pharisee, He taught us always to choose the lowest places. "While the king was at

his repose, my spikenard," says the spouse in the Canticle, "sent forth the odor thereof." (Cant. i. 11.) "The spikenard," says St. Bernard, "is a low plant, and an emblem of humility. Be, therefore, ready to prepare such food for your Guest, as you know He will gladly feed on." Seek, therefore, the virtue of humility in every action of your life.

III. This Guest of our souls is so liberal, that He brings gifts and presents with Him, for those who receive His visits worthily. In this spirit of liberality, He in a Pharisee's house cured a person laboring under the dropsy. If you examine yourself accurately, you will more than probably discover, that you labor under some spiritual complaint which requires immediate relief. Discover your spiritual ailment, and then humbly and fervently implore the Giver of all good things, to grant you His assistance to effect a lasting cure.

## MONDAY.

### **The Sick Man at the Probatic Pond.—I.**

I. God bestowed a great benefit on the Jews, in making the "probatic" pond a cure for all diseases. It was situated near the temple, and the sheep that were to be offered in sacrifice, were washed in it. The water in this pond was stirred by an angel, and hence it received the virtue of curing all diseases in the person who first entered it, after the waters were moved. This probatic pond was a type of the sacraments of baptism and penance, in which those, who wish to follow Christ, are washed for "the sacrifice of justice." (Ps. l. 21.) These sacraments possess a heavenly virtue, which is given to them by "the angel of the testament," that is, in the lan-

guage of the prophet, by Christ Himself. It purifies us from all sin, its effects are not confined to those, who approach the sacraments first, but it is communicated to all, without exception, who approach them, with worthy dispositions. Meditate on the benefits resulting from their institution.

II. Around this pond, "lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water." (John v. 3.) God wishes us to wait with patience for His favors; hence David says, "with expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me." (Ps. xxxix. 2.) Among other persons, who were afflicted, "there was a certain man there, that had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity." (John v. 5.) His complaint was the palsy. The spiritual palsy of the soul, is a relaxation of its nerves and faculties, a want of spiritual vigor and life, and a decay of energy. Examine how long you have labored under this infirmity, and seek a remedy for it in the holy sacraments of the Church.

III. Jesus proposed His cure to the sick man, and said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole." God can render us just in His sight, by His own power alone, if He please, but He does not do it, without our consent. "He who made thee, without thy own concurrence," writes St. Augustine, "will not save thee without it." Examine whether you have the will to take advantage of God's concurrence; your salvation depends upon it.

## TUESDAY.

### **The Sick Man at the Probatic Pond.—II.**

I. This sick man confessed his want of power, for he

could neither move himself nor cause the waters of the probatic pond to move; "I have no man," he said, "when the water is troubled." (John v. 7.) In consequence of his humble confession, he immediately received a cure from Christ; for an humble acknowledgement of our own weakness is the best disposition to receive God's assistance. Perhaps you have reason to say, "I have no man," that is, I have not the heart, nor the courage of a man to overcome myself. Christ our Lord is ready to raise you with His grace from the state of lethargy and spiritual languor, into which you have fallen, if you be willing on your part. You have also preachers, superiors and directors, to admonish and help you.

II. The efficacy of Christ's words cured the sick man. "Arise," said He, "take up thy bed and walk." Speak, O Lord, in the same manner to me; "Say to my soul, I am thy salvation." (Ps. xxxiv. 3.) Reflect on the obedience of this man; he immediately rose, and though it was the Sabbath day, he took his bed upon his shoulders and walked. This is a perfect example of blind obedience. Do you therefore, on your part, take up this yoke of obedience and walk in the paths of justice. Walk before God and be perfect.

III. After Christ had performed this miracle, "He went aside from the multitude" (John v. 13), to give us an example of shunning the applause of men. "Afterward Jesus finding him in the temple, said to him, behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." Imagine the same words to be spoken to you, when you approach the sacrament of penance, "Go and sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee."

## WEDNESDAY.

**Cure of the Paralytic.—I.**

I. A great multitude was gathered together in and around the house in which Jesus was, "so that there was no room, no, not even at the door, and He spoke to them the word." (Mark ii. 2.) Observe our Lord's indefatigable zeal in laboring for the salvation of mankind; at no time and in no place does He spare His exertions in this great cause, but freely admits and instructs all. Imitate His example and embrace the sentiment of St. Paul, who followed it so well; "I most gladly will spend, and be spent myself for your souls, although loving you more, I be loved less." (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

II. "And behold men brought in a bed, a man, who had the palsy, and when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the roof and let him down through the tiles, with his bed, into the midst before Jesus." (Luke v. 18.) Admire the faith of these men, for they undoubtedly believed, that Christ would cure him, and hence, they took every pains to bring the sick man to Him. Observe, also, their courage and patience in overcoming the difficulties that prevented their free access to the house. They forced their way through everything until they had accomplished their desire. "A true belief," writes St. Bonaventure, "is not destroyed, nor cooled by impatience, but rather inflamed." Examine your conduct on similar occasions, and see how easily you desist from a good work, through fear.

III. Consider the wonderful mercy of Christ: "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." (Matt. ix. 2.)

"O wonderful humility!" says St. Jerom, writing on this text; "A decrepit and despicable poor man is called son, when the Scribes and Pharisees would not deign to touch him." Remark how He forgives him his sins, for they were the cause of his infirmity, to teach you, that diseases are often inflicted for hidden sins, and, that when you are sick, you must first seek the health of your soul, and then your corporal health.

#### THURSDAY.

#### Cure of the Paralytic.—II.

I. The Scribes and Pharisees immediately began to murmur, "Who is this, who speaketh blasphemies; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke v. 21.) Con-  
dole with your Lord for being considered a blasphemer, and be not troubled if at any time you be treated below your deserts. Observe His mildness; He is not moved to indignation, He does not revenge Himself, as He could so easily have done, but sweetly and mildly endeavors to lead them out of their error. "Why," He says to them, "do you think evil in your hearts." (Matt. ix. 4.)

II. In proof of His divinity and His power of forgiving sin, Christ immediately cured the man, and said to him, "Rise up, take thy bed and go into thy house." Your house and your home is heaven; on earth you are only a stranger and a passenger; hasten therefore home, and fix your thoughts, your cares and desires there, where you are to dwell forever. "Man shall go," says the Wise Man, "into the house of his eternity." (Eccles. xii. 5.) "A house is taken as it were forever," writes the pious St. Augustine, "but a nest is built only for a season."

Do not pay more attention to your temporary residence in this world, than to your place of permanent abode.

III. When the man was cured, "he went away into his own house, magnifying God." It is one of the proper effects of spiritual health to praise God, and to give Him thanks for benefits received. Take care that you always magnify God, when you retire from the sacrament of Penance freed from the deadly palsy of sin, and say with royal David, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth." (Ps. xxxiii. 2.)

#### FRIDAY.

#### Cure of the Withered Hand.

I. "And it came to pass also, on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue, and taught, and there was a man, whose right hand was withered." (Luke vi. 6.) Christ took advantage of every occasion to bring souls to His Father; hence, on the Sabbath-days He frequented the synagogue, in order that he might instruct the multitude, which on those occasions was collected together. He found in the synagogue a man, whose right hand was withered. "There are many," says an eminent spiritual writer, "who in the Church of God, have their left hands ready for any *evil* action, whilst their right hands are withered and incapable of performing any *good* action." "Their right hand, is the right hand of iniquity." (Ps. cxliii. 8.) Examine your conscience on this subject.

II. "Then He saith to the man, stretch forth thy hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored to health, like as the other." (Matt. xii. 13.) Christ could easily

have produced the miraculous effect without making the man stretch out his hand, but He wished to teach us, that every spiritual effect is generally produced with the concurrence of His creatures. "Turn to Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you." (Zach. i. 3.) Extend, therefore, your right hand to good works, to the assistance of your brethren, and to your God in prayer, and you will without doubt obtain perfect spiritual health. "Whatever thy hand is able to do," says the Wise Man, "do it earnestly." (Eccles. ix. 10.)

III. The Scribes and Pharisees, always ready to find fault with Christ, instead of taking advantage of His miracles for their own salvation, make use of every one of His actions as a motive to destroy Him. "But He that dwelleth in the heavens, shall laugh at them." (Ps. ii. 4.) Christ, however, although He might have annihilated them in a moment, chose to bear with their insolent audacity, in order to teach His followers to be like Himself, "meek and humble of heart." (Matt. xi. 12.)

## SATURDAY.

### **The Woman who was Bent Down.**

I. Christ being again in the synagogue according to His custom, "behold, there was a woman, who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and she was bent down, and could not look upward at all." (Luke xiii. 11.) This infirmity was caused in her by the devil, as Christ Himself tells us, either in punishment of her sins, as was the case with Giezi the leper, or by God's permission to try her virtue, as was the case with holy Job. In a mystical sense, our infernal enemy induces all those to labor



under the same infirmity, who stoop to worldly things, and keep their minds and hearts continually fixed on them, in such a manner, that they cannot raise their thoughts to heaven. Of this numerous class of Christians, it may be said, "they turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments." (Dan. xiii. 9.)

II. Christ's merciful disposition prompted Him to call the woman to Him and cure her. "Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity." (Luke xiii. 12.) The effect immediately followed His omnipotent word; for having placed His hands on her, "she was immediately made straight, and glorified God." Observe and imitate the gratitude of this woman; for as soon as she saw herself cured, she began "to glorify God." How much greater reason have you to glorify God, "Who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. cii. 3.) Say with the enraptured prophet, "The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become salvation to me, He is my God and I will glorify Him." (Exod. xv. 2.)

III. Consider the perverse zeal of the ruler of the synagogue; "He was angry that Jesus had cured on the Sabbath," as if it were not lawful to do a good action, which was not servile, on the Sabbath day. Passions and a desire of gratifying them are frequently mistaken for zeal. Do all your actions with a pure and sincere intention to please God, and you need not fear the judgments which men may pass on them. "Fear not the reproach of men and be not afraid of their blasphemies. For the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool." (Is. li. 7.)

**SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

**Christ the Love of your Soul.**

“Behold my love speaketh to me, arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come.” (Cant. ii. 10.)

I. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matt. xxii. 37.) God wishes us to make Him the object of our souls’ love, and hence He calls us His beloved, His spouses, and His sisters. “Open to Me, My sister, My love.” (Cant. v. 2.) Love is gained and supported by love, and hence the disciple of love, St. John, writes, “Let us love God, because God first loved us.” (1 John iv. 19.) This God “hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Apoc. i. 5.) Never did mother love her infant, nor spouse his beloved, so affectionately as God loves man. He makes Himself man’s companion, his food, his ransom, and his everlasting reward. Surely a Being so loving deserves to be loved “with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind.”

II. To-day your Beloved will enter your heart in the Holy Eucharist, in order that you may enjoy His conversation and affectionate entertainment with more leisure. “If any one loves Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.” (John xiv. 23.) Reflect what an immensity of heavenly graces will be bestowed on your soul by His remaining with you, if your mind be properly disposed to receive Him. God says of Himself, “With Me are riches and glory; glorious riches and jus-

tice, that I may enrich them that love Me, and may fill their treasures." (Prov. viii. 18 and 21.)

III. Your disposition must be to return love for love, and your love must be as extensive as you can render it. Love consists in action and not in words; hence Christ says, "If any man love Me he will keep My word," that is, My commands and counsels, and observe My admonitions. Blush for your past want of observance of these, and be particular in your observance of them for the future, in order that you may be able to say, "my Beloved to me and I to Him" (Cant. ii. 16) in willing or not willing the same thing that He loves or dislikes. There is a perfect union of wills between two persons, that love each other.

## MONDAY.

### Cure of the Leper.—I.

I. A certain leper came to Christ to be healed. He entreated Christ to cure him, with the most profound reverence, for "kneeling and falling on his face, he besought Him." (Mark i. 40.) He addressed Him with great faith in his power; "Lord, if Thou wilt," he says, "Thou canst make me clean." (Luke v. 12.) His resignation was exemplary; he does not present an absolute, but a conditional petition; "if Thou wilt," he says, if it be pleasing to Thy will, Thou canst cure me. Such ought to be the character of your prayers, humble, full of faith and resignation to the Divine will. "To whom shall I have respect," says God by the mouth of His prophet, "but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words." (Is. lxvi. 2.)

II. Christ did not disdain the sight and presence of this loathsome spectacle, nor did He defer His cure to another day, and although He might have cured him with a single word, in order to correct our vicious delicacy on similar occasions, He condescended to touch him. "Wherefore, stretching out His hands, He touched him, saying, I will, be thou made clean." (Matt. viii. 3.) Ponder the words "I will," they import, it is both My wish and desire, for God "will have all men to be saved." (1 Tim. ii. 4.) Examine, therefore, if it be not your own fault that you are not purified from your spiritual leprosy of sin.

III. This leprosy of the soul, is like that of the body; both defile the subject in which they exist and make it odious, the latter in the sight of man, the former in the sight of God. The leprosy of the soul, however, is more detestable in the same proportion as it is more dangerous, and disposes its subjects not to temporal but to eternal death. Hence the virtuous St. Louis with good reason said, that he would rather incur the leprosy of the body, than the leprosy of the soul, by sin, and severely reprehended one of his nobles for making a contrary choice.

## TUESDAY.

### Cure of the Leper.—II.

I. After having cured the leper, "Jesus said to him, see thou tell no man." (Matt. viii. 4.) Christ knew that he would publish his miraculous cure, from a feeling of gratitude, and there was no danger of vain-glory in Christ; why then did He forbid him to divulge his cure? He did it for our instruction, and to teach us to avoid vain-glory, as one of our most dangerous enemies. "Vain-

glory," writes St. Basil, "is a robber of our spiritual riches, a flattering enemy of our souls, and the bane of virtue." Examine yourself, on the subject of this vice, and beware lest it may be said of you with truth, "You have received your reward." (Matt. vi. 5.)

II. "Go show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift, which Moses commanded for a testimony to them." (Matt. viii. 4.) The law of Moses reserved to the priests, both the judgment of the leprosy itself in case of doubt, and its cure. Remark, how observant Christ was of the law, and how He honored and respected the priests, however malicious they might be toward Him. He has granted much greater prerogatives to the priests of the new law, who have the power of healing every kind of spiritual leprosy. Therefore, as often as you feel yourself infected with this spiritual disorder, "go and show yourself to the priests."

III. According to the ancient law, the leper had to make an offering. He was commanded, after having cut off his hair and washed his clothes and himself, to offer in sacrifice, a lamb without spot. Let your offering be a sacrifice of praise; as often as you return from the sacrament of penance, "offer to God a sacrifice of praise." (Ps. xlix. 14.) You can offer the spotless Lamb of God, by hearing Mass.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### **Cure of the Ten Lepers.—I.**

I. As Christ was passing through Samaria he entered a town, where "there met Him ten lepers, who stood afar off, and they lifted up their voice saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." (Luke xvii. 12.) Their prayer was

accompanied with three conditions, which are requisite to every good prayer. 1. They were humble, for "they stood afar off." 2. They prayed with unanimity and fervor, "they lifted up their voice." Earnest and fervent prayer is pleasing to God; hence holy David says: "when I cried to Him, He heard me." (Ps. xxi. 18.) 3. They did not pray that he would restore them to health, but that "He would have mercy on them," thus with resignation leaving the whole affair in the hands of God. Imitate them in your prayers.

II. "When He saw them, He said, Go show yourselves to the priests." Christ might have cured them in an instant, but He wished to try their obedience and to impress on His followers a respect for the priesthood, and the observances of the law. He wished moreover to teach us, that we ought to repair to the priests and unfold ourselves to them, as often as we are struck with the leprosy of sin. Do not dare to pass a night in this state of spiritual leprosy, for what would be the consequence, if during that night, God called your soul to appear before Him? Your leprosy would attach to you for all eternity.

III. "It came to pass, as they went, they were made clean." Ponder their prompt obedience, and its fruit. So it often happens to those who are laboring under some temptation; while they are going to manifest themselves to their ghostly Father, they are freed and the enemy has fled. So also, many, who are preparing for confession, are justified beforehand by Almighty God, who gives them perfect contrition. "I said," cries out the prophet, "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin." (Ps. xxxi. 5.)

## THURSDAY.

**Cure of the Ten Lepers.—II.**

I. "And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, went back with a loud voice glorifying God." (Luke xvii. 15.) We ought always to be grateful to God for the benefits, which we receive from Him. "In all things," says the Apostle, "give thanks, for this is the will of God." (1 Thes. v. 13.) This thanksgiving is to be performed, in the first place, with a "loud voice," that is with great energy and affection. We must "glorify God," and with holy David, "extol His name." (Ps. xxxiii. 4.) We must besides, accompany all this with great humility, fall prostrate at the feet of our Lord, and acknowledge ourselves unworthy of His mercies and favors. "There can be no offering more grateful to God," writes St. Augustine, "than that of thanksgiving."

II. Of the ten lepers, who were cured, only one returned. "There is no one found to return," said Christ on the occasion, "and give glory to God, but this stranger." (Luke xvii. 18.) Reflect how many thousands there are, whom God daily preserves and feeds, and who do not acknowledge the benefit. They eat their food, like irrational creatures, without raising their minds or hearts to heaven. "I have brought up children," says God by His prophet, "and exalted them, but they have despised me." (Is. i. 2.) These consider themselves as inhabitants and sons of the earth, and believe that they possess here, "a settled habitation;" but do you on the contrary consider yourself a stranger and pilgrim in the world. Then you will easily acknowledge God's gifts, and all His favors bestowed on you.

III. This stranger, by being grateful for his corporal health, received a still greater favor, the cure of his soul. He was converted to the gospel, which Christ preached; hence Christ says, "Arise, go thy way, for thy faith has made thee whole." The other nine, as St. Augustine fears, were probably lost. "For the hope of the unthankful shall melt away as the winter's ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water." (Wis. xiv. 29.) Take care then to be always grateful to God, for the benefits which you receive.

#### FRIDAY.

#### **Cure of the Deaf and Dumb Man.—I.**

I. Whilst Christ was passing through Galilee, "they bring to Him one that was deaf and dumb, and they besought Him lay His hand on him." (Mark vii. 32.) Ponder how meritorious an action it is, to bring others to Jesus Christ, and endeavor by every means consistent with your state and calling, to bring to Him those, who are spiritually deaf and dumb. What is spiritual deafness? He is spiritually deaf, who will not listen to the truths of faith, nor to the voice of God when He calls him to virtue and perfection. Examine whether you be not in some respect spiritually deaf, and do not shut your ears to the voice of God; fear lest the terrible words be addressed to you, "then shall they call upon Me, and I will not hear." (Prov. i. 28.)

II. What is spiritual dumbness? He is spiritually dumb, who does not correct his brother, when by doing so, he can prevent him from sinning. He also is spiritually dumb, who does not preach the Word of God, when it is his duty, or make open profession of his faith,



when the honor of God, his own or neighbor's good requires it. Lastly, he labors under this spiritual complaint, whose tongue is not employed in the praises of God, in the exercises of devotion and pious conversations. "Wo is me," says the prophet, "because I held my peace." (Is. vi. 6.) And, "you that are mindful of the Lord hold not your peace." (Is. lxii. 6.)

III. Christ did not reject this poor distressed man, but took him aside and cured him. You also must retire from the noise and bustle of the world if you wish to be cured. You must prepare yourself by prayer and spiritual exercises. Observe how He cured this man, not by His word or command, as He cured others, but "He put His fingers in his ears, and spitting He touched his tongue." (Mark vii. 33.) Christ performs His cures in very different manners, and exercises His followers in a very different way. Submit yourself to His holy guidance and Divine pleasure in all things, and by this means you will be cured of all your infirmities.

## SATURDAY.

### Cure of the Deaf and Dumb Man.—II.

I. After Christ had pronounced the words, "Be opened, immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right." (Mark vii. 34.) It is a sign that our ears are opened, when we do not contradict, nor resist Divine inspirations, but with all humility obey them. "The Lord hath opened my ear," says the prophet, "and I do not resist." (Is. l. 5.) Examine whether the ears of your heart be open to the voice of heavenly wisdom, or rather whether

you be one of those, "who will not hear the voice of the charmers." (Ps. lvii. 5.)

II. It is recorded of this man, whose hearing and speech were restored to him, not that he simply spoke, but that "he spoke right." Hence we are taught to place a particular guard on our tongues, which St. James pronounces to be "a world of iniquity." (St. James iii. 6.) He speaks right, who announces the praises of God, who speaks on things that regard salvation, and whose tongue is not employed in conversation on vain or idle affairs or in detractions or murmurs. Examine how you employ your tongue, and remember the assertion of the psalmist, "A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth." (Ps. cxxxix. 12.)

III. Christ upon this occasion also, "charged them that they should tell no man," in order to teach His followers to shun the applause of men; "But so much the more, a great deal did they publish it, and so much the more did they wonder." (Mark vii. 36.) They were not in this instance disobedient to Christ, because Christ did not command with an intention of obliging them, but only did what humility required on His part, whilst they by honoring and glorifying Him, performed on their part the duty of gratitude. On this occasion it was said of Christ, "He hath done all things well," in order that you may learn to seek perfection in every thing, and not to do well some things only, and neglect others. "In all things," writes St. Paul to his Corinthian converts, "let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God." (2 Cor. vi. 4.)

**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

"I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength, the Lord is my firmament, my refuge and my deliverer." (Ps. xvii. 2.)

**Christ the Strength of Your Soul.**

I. It is read in the gospel of to-day, that Christ cured a man that was afflicted with a palsy. (Matt. ix. 1.) Spiritual palsy is an enervation of the soul and an utter decay of its strength, caused by sloth and pusillanimity. Reflect how prone you are to this complaint, how weak you are in bearing adversity, how faint-hearted in undertaking any thing for God, and lastly inconstant in keeping your good resolutions. How remiss you are in your prayers and indevout in your spiritual exercises. You may truly say with the Prophet, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue has cleaved to my jaws." (Ps. xxi. 16.)

II. Christ is properly the fortitude and strength of your soul; "O Lord," says the Prophet, "my might and my strength" (Jer. xvi. 19), and another Prophet exclaims, "The Lord, my strength and my praise." (Is. xii. 2.) This effect He chiefly produces in the Holy Eucharist, for in that sacrament, when worthily received, He gives the soul strength to overcome every fear and difficulty, and to undertake and succeed in every enterprise, however great, when it has for its object the glory of God. Hence the Eucharist is called by the holy Fathers, "the bread of the strong, the food of the great, the bread that confirms and strengthens the heart of man." The loaf of bread which was given to Elias, and which enabled him to walk forty days and forty nights, to the mountain of

God, was a figure of the eucharistic bread. Wish therefore for the happy moment, in which you are to receive this Divine and heavenly food.

III. In order that you may be well disposed to obtain the cure of your spiritual palsy, you must imitate the faith of the sick man. Approach therefore with confidence; throw yourself into the arms of the saints, especially of the Blessed Virgin, in order that they may conduct and present you to our Lord. Say with the Psalmist, "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; Thou hast made my arms like a brazen bow, because Thou art my strength and my refuge." (Ps. xxx. 3, and Ps. xvii. 35.)

## MONDAY.

### Cure of the Man Born Blind.—I.

I. "Jesus passing by, saw a man that was blind from his birth." (John ix. 1.) He beheld him with the eyes of mercy, and immediately began to think of a remedy. Entreat Him to look on you with the same affection. "See my abjection and my labor, and forgive me all my sins." (Ps. xxiv. 18.) We are all born blind, for we are all born in sin, and involved in the darkness of ignorance, in consequence of the transgression of our first parents. Those characters, are in a special manner *blind from their birth*, who boast of their noble birth and their parentage; "virtue," writes a profane poet, "is the only true nobility." Examine your conscience on this subject.

II. "His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered; neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God be made manifest in

him." (John ix. 2.) Learn from this, that sicknesses and calamities are not always sent as punishments of sin, but to give us opportunities of increasing the glory of God, by our virtuous submission. Such was the case with holy Job, Tobias and others, in which cases, "I must work the works of Him that sent me," observes Jesus Christ, "whilst it is day," that is, whilst the day of this mortal life lasts. With much more reason ought you to perform the same works, whilst you live, before "you go, and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death." (Job x. 21.)

III. "Christ spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle and spread the clay upon his eyes." He applied a remedy suited by its nature rather to injure than to cure, in order to show His power. If you wish to be relieved from the spiritual blindness of your soul, frequently think of the base materials of which you are formed. Remember, man, that "dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (Gen. iii. 19.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Man Born Blind.—II.

I. This poor man was grateful for the favor which he had received from Christ. He published loudly to the world, "That man, who is called Jesus, made clay and anointed my eyes." (John ix. 11.) He resolutely and constantly professed Christ to be a prophet, even before the Pharisees, without fearing the dangerous consequences of their anger. He patiently bore all the insults and contumelious language of these hypocrites. "Thou art wholly born in sins," they say, "and dost

thou teach us?" Such are the resolution and patience of a soul, which is enlightened by the grace of God. Examine how you may imitate this man.

II. That man was immediately driven out of the synagogue, for speaking so well of Christ. Learn to suffer willingly in a good cause, for "all who will live piously in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) Christ did not abandon this man, whom the Pharisees had rejected, but went to see him and revealed His divinity to him, "and the man, falling down, adored Him." (John ix. 38.) Often excite yourself to similar acts of faith, and adore your God, in an humble posture.

III. Christ reproved the pride of the Pharisees, who were nevertheless wise and quick-sighted in their own opinions. "For judgment," He says, "I am come into this world, that they who see not may see, and they who see may become blind." (John ix. 39.) The poor and simple are to become acquainted with the truth, but the proud and the wise ones of this world will be struck blind at the greatness of Christ's splendor. Hence the author of the Proverbs advises us, "Be not wise in thine own conceits" (Pro. iii. 7), lest becoming blind, thou run headlong into perdition.

## WEDNESDAY.

### **The Blind Man of Jericho.**

I. "It came to pass, that when Jesus drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man, sat by the way-side begging." (Luke xviii. 35.) This blind man is a perfect type of every sinner. For in the first place, a sinner sits in darkness and finds rest and satisfaction in his

sins, for he is habituated to them. He does not sit *in* the way, but *by* the way, in which the virtuous cheerfully run, and aim at perfection. "I have run," says the royal Psalmist, "the way of Thy commandments." (Ps. cxiii. 32.) The sinner *sits* begging some trifling and idle comfort from those who pass by; that is, he seeks for that comfort from creatures which is only to be derived from the Creator. How unfortunately blind are those people who cannot discover subjects of interest when you place before them the torments of hell or the joys of heaven! "They walk," as St. Augustine says, "from darkness into darkness."

II. Consider the fervor of this blind man, when he heard that it was Christ who was passing by. Actuated by a strong faith, he acknowledged His power and implored His mercy, "Jesus, son of David," he said, "have mercy on me." Though others endeavor to prevent him, he still perseveres in imploring Christ's mercy. The more they opposed him, the more his fervor increased: "But he cried out much more." Learn hence, that you ought to be constant and fervent in the service of God, and feel convinced that nothing ought ever to make your thoughts wander whilst you are praying for the "one thing necessary." Neither your employments nor your corporal necessities, nor anything else ought to attract your mind when you are treating with God concerning your salvation.

III. Christ stood and asked the blind man, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" In general He does not give us His grace unless we ourselves co-operate with it. The blind man answered, "Lord, that I may see." Present a similar petition to your Lord: say to Him, "Lord grant that I may see; grant that I may see You, and see myself; 'Enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death;

O my God, enlighten my darkness.' " (Ps. xii. 4 and xvii. 29.)

## THURSDAY.

### The Blind Man of Bethsaida.

I. "And they came to Bethsaida, and they bring to Him a blind man, and they besought Him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town." (Mark viii. 22.) "That man is blind who does not see what he was, what he is, and what he is to be." Examine whether or not you be spiritually blind, and believe that whosoever wishes to be cured of this disease must suffer himself to be led by Christ "out of the town;" that is, out of the bustle and noise of the world, and then he will be enlightened.

II. Christ did not immediately and by a single word cure this man, as He did so many others, but "spitting upon his eyes, and laying His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything." Thus Christ pursues different means in enlightening the minds of men: into some He introduces the effect in a moment; into others, by degrees. In this last manner the blind man recovered his sight; in the first stage of his cure, "I see," he said, "men as trees walking." To men who are not thoroughly enlightened by divine grace all worldly things must appear much greater than they really are. In another sense, wicked men may be called trees, for unless they bear fruit, "they will be cut down and cast into the fire."

III. His sight was at last perfectly restored to this blind man, "so that he saw all things clearly." Entreat your Lord that you may see all things clearly, and be



enabled to distinguish between true and false, solid and counterfeit good. "Many things are represented in false colors, which stand in need of being cleared, O Lord, by Your divine light." Christ, lastly, said to the man, "Go into thy house." Our house and our home is heaven, for, as St. Paul says, "You are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestics of God." (Ephes. ii. 19.) Act therefore as a domestic of God and a son of light, for fear "the Lord strike thee with madness and blindness and fury of mind, and make thee grope at mid-day, as the blind is wont to grope in the dark, and not make straight thy ways." (Deu. xxviii. 28.)

## FRIDAY.

### Cure of the Lunatic Child.—I.

I. Consider the great tyranny, which the Devil exercises on the bodies of those whom God permits him to possess. In the case of the lunatic child, he dashed him against the ground, made him foam at the mouth, often cast him into the fire, and often into the water. If he be so tormenting in this life, what must he be in the next? In this world his hands are tied, but in the next he has complete possession of the poor sinner. Of this horrid empire in hell, the Prophet says, "The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the ground thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch." (Is. xxxiv. 9.)

II. The Devil exercises a similar power in this world over sinners, who are subject to him. He makes them lunatic; that is, inconstant, like the moon, in their resolutions of reform. He renders them deaf to the inspira-

tions of God and dumb in His praises. He "casts them on the ground," by making them fix their affection on earthly things. He makes them foam at the mouth, and gnash their teeth, by inducing them to make use of foul and unworthy language. He often throws them into the fires of concupiscence, and extinguishes every kindling spark of virtue by throwing them into the watery gulfs of worldly pleasures. Follow the advice of the Apostle, and be one of those who "recover themselves from the snares of the Devil, by whom they are held captives at his will." (II. Tim. ii. 26.)

III. This lunatic child was first presented to the Apostles, who could not cure him. So ought we to have recourse to every human means before we expect a miracle from God. The disciples were not permitted to cure this youth, probably to increase and preserve their humility. Cherish this virtue, and say with the pious David, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications." (Ps. cxviii. 71.)

## SATURDAY.

### Cure of the Lunatic Child.—II.

I. When Christ was requested to cure this youth, He reprehended the incredulity of His disciples. "O, incredulous generation, how long shall I suffer you!" (Mark ix. 18.) Learn from this how odious in the sight of God are incredulity and obstinacy of unbelief. When the possessed lunatic was brought before Him, "immediately the spirit troubled him, and being thrown down upon the ground he rolled about foaming." How bold and insolent is this infernal spirit, even in the pres-

ence of Christ. Do not, therefore, wonder if he assail you, during your most sacred devotions, when you approach the sacrament of the altar.

II. The command of Christ dispossessed the Devil, although he had possessed this young man from his infancy. "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, go out of him and enter no more into him." (Mark ix. 24.) O Lord, speak with the same efficacy to my soul. Observe how the Devil, crying out and greatly tearing him, went out of him. Whilst he possessed this young man, he behaved more mildly to him; but when he was forced to depart, he began "to tear him." The Devil is always most malicious when we abandon his service.

III. His disease was difficult of cure, because it was inveterate and had grown with him from his infancy. It is difficult to abandon vices to which you have been long accustomed. "A long sickness is troublesome to the physician." (Ecclus. x. 11.) Christ observed of this evil spirit, "This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." Learn to appreciate the value of these spiritual weapons, and to use them successfully against your arch-enemy.

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ the Friend of Your Soul.

"Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, my beloved." (Cant. c. 1.)

I. In the gospel of to-day, we read the following expression: "Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" (Matt. xxii. 12) Christ

in the most merciful manner invites all mankind to become His friends, and inasmuch as depends on Him wishes to be our universal friend. He endeavored to bring even Judas back to a sense of his duty, whilst he was practising treason against Him. "Friend," he asked him, "whereunto art thou come?" (Matt. xxvi. 50.) Ponder the greatness of the honor which he does us. "We are not worthy to be servants," writes St. Gregory, "and we are styled friends." What an honor is it for miserable wretches formed of the dust of the earth to be the friends of the ruler of the universe!

II. This friend of yours will visit you to-day in the Eucharist, to instruct you with His divine wisdom, to enrich you with His treasures, to defend you by His power, and to inflame you with His love. Among friends all things are in common. It is recorded of the friendship which existed between David and Jonathan: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." (1 Kings, xviii. 1.) The friendship of Christ, however, in our regard, proceeds much farther. He gives Himself to us for our meat and drink. Under these appearances He enters into your breast, in order, as St. Cyril remarks, that "He may be joined in flesh and blood with you." (Cant. iv.)

III. The best preparation to receive your Saviour is to return love for love. This your loving friend requires from every one, and He has instituted this banquet for such only as return love for love. "Eat, O friends," he says, "and drink and be inebriated, my beloved." (Cant. v. 1.) In the gospel of to-day He condemns to perpetual darkness the man who presented himself without the "nuptial garment" of charity. Love, therefore, this kind friend of yours, and do whatever he inspires *you* to do, remembering His expression, recorded in the

Gospel of St. John: "You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John xv. 14.)

## MONDAY.

### **The Woman Cured of the Issue of Blood.**

I. "And behold a woman, who was troubled with an issue of blood, twelve years, who had bestowed all her substance on physicians, and could not be healed by any, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment." (Luke ix. 43.) Admire the humility of this woman, who did not presume to ask Christ to cure her, nor to appear before Him, but privately touched His garment. Her confidence was equally great: "She said within herself, if I shall but touch His garment, I shall be healed." Those Christians, in a spiritual sense, labor under the disease of this woman, who spend their time in pursuing the vain and perishable things of this earth, and direct all their actions to them: they spend their substance in vain on physicians, who cannot cure them; for the deceitful pleasures and idle enjoyments of the world can never cure the ailments of an immortal soul, whose capacity nothing but God can fill.

II. When the woman had touched Christ's garment, she received perfect health, as a reward for her faith. With how much more reason may those expect to receive perfect spiritual health who touch not only the garment of Christ, but receive in the Eucharist His own all-healing body and blood. Remark how this touch of the woman did not escape Christ's knowledge; and learn hence, that no action of yours, however secret, can be

concealed from God, "Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam." (Jer. xxxii. 19.)

III. Although the multitude pressed on Christ, He asked, "Who is it that touched me?" The others touched Him corporally; but this woman touched Him spiritually, and therefore she was cured. Thus, many touch Christ, particularly in the Eucharist; but do it without spiritual feeling. Of such as these the Prophet speaks when he says: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their hearts are far from Me." (Is. xxix. 13.) Avoid being classed with that kind of false Christians.

## **TUESDAY.**

### **Raising of the Ruler's Daughter.**

I. "Behold there came a man (whose name was Jairus), and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at the feet of Jesus." (Luke viii. 41.) Observe how misfortunes humble even rulers, and force them to have recourse to God. Hence, king David says, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me" (Ps. cxviii. 71); and again, "I am turned in my anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened." (Ps. xxxi. 4.) This ruler prays for his only daughter, who was at the point of death. Examine whether your soul be not at the point of death, in consequence of your carelessness in resisting some grievous temptation, or of your not avoiding venial sins.

II. Consider Christ's goodness in going immediately to the ruler's house, although He might have cured her whilst he was at a distance. Besides, to teach us humility, He endeavors as much as He can to conceal the

miracle by taking only three of His disciples with Him and by driving the musicians and the multitude out of the house. Learn to sequester yourself from the noise and rabble of worldly thoughts if you desire to live for Christ. "Wisdom, says the sea, is not in me." (Job xxviii. 14.) By the sea, says St. Gregory, interpreting this passage, "is meant the world."

III. "Christ, taking her by the hand, cried out, saying: Maid, arise." (Luke viii. 54.) Thus He raises up sinners from their sins, holds them by the hand, and directs them to good works. "And He bade them to give her to eat," to show you that those who rise from a state of sin must receive the spiritual food of the Eucharist, to prevent them from relapsing. Take care, then, that you receive this food often, and in a proper manner, that you may live forever.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### Raising of the Widow's Son.—I.

I. "Jesus went into a city called Naim, and behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother." (Luke vii. 11.) This was a young man in the flower of youth; learn hence, that no age is secure against the shafts of death. Imagine that this young man addresses you in the language of Ecclesiasticus: "Remember my judgment, for thine also shall be so; yesterday for me, and to-day for thee." (Ecclus. xxxviii. 22.) Examine what would become of you, were you to die this very day. This young man died to God in a spiritual sense sooner, than others who are older; for, as St. Jerome says, "Youth has many conflicts of the body to undergo."

II. Our Lord met the corpse, not by chance, but by design, and offered, of His own accord, to raise the dead man. Oh, how frequently has He offered His assistance, to raise you from the death of sin, and you have refused. Beware lest you wilfully resist and contemn the grace which He offers you, for fear He may utter the dreadful sentence against you: "I will laugh in your destruction." (Prov. i. 24.)

III. Christ, moved with compassion for the forlorn widow, said to her, "Weep not," for you shall soon be comforted. In the same manner, do not you weep or be overcome with temporal losses which will soon be remedied; but rather reserve your tears for the everlasting evils that are the results of your own and others' sins. Of such as these it is said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matt. v. 5.)

## THURSDAY.

### Raising of the Widow's Son.—II.

I. "And He came near and touched the bier, (and they that carried it stood still,) and He said, Young man, I say to thee arise." (Luke vii. 14.) He speaks in the most imperious manner, to show that He is the Lord of all things, "that hath power of life and death, and leadeth down to the gates of death, and bringeth back again." (Wis. xvi. 13.) Sin is the death of the soul, and hell its grave, "For the rich man died, and he was buried in hell." (Luke xvi. 22.) The bier on which the sinful soul is conducted to hell is the body, and the bearers are our vicious habits; and as the bier of a dead man is often ornamented with silk and gold whilst the corpse



which it carries is corruption itself, so is the body often adorned and covered with the richest clothes, whilst the soul which it contains is abominable in the sight of God. Christ often comes and touches the bier, that is, afflicts the body with some sickness, and by this means brings the sinner to life again.

II. "And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, and He delivered him to his mother." What joy must have flowed into this widow's heart! How the company must have been astonished! Thus a sinner who returns to the life of grace and is restored to his spiritual Mother the Church, begins to speak of such things as belong to God, confesses his sins, asks pardon, and glorifies God.

III. "And there came a fear on them all, and they glorified Him." From the astonishing miracle which they had witnessed, there arose in the by-standers a fear of offending a God of such infinite power, a God "that killeth and maketh alive again; He bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again." (1 Kings, ii. 6.) Reflect how necessary it is for you to possess this holy fear. For "the fear of the Lord hateth evil." (Prov. viii. 13.) And "they that fear the Lord will seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him." (Ecclus. ii. 19.)

## FRIDAY.

### The Resuscitation of Lazarus.—I.

I. "There was a certain man sick, named Lazarus, in Bethania." (John xi. 1.) The death of Lazarus proceeded from a languishing disease. So also does the death of the soul ensue from tepidity and decay of spirit, if they be not cured in time. "When concupiscence hath

conceived, it bringeth forth sin, but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death." (James i. 15.) The infirmity of our nature is an incentive to sin, but injures no one but those who willingly yield to it. In regard to those who resist and fight manfully, this infirmity will increase their merit. "Gladly, therefore," writes St. Paul, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

II. "His sisters therefore sent to Him saying, Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." (John xi. 3.) They do not prescribe to Him what they wish Him to do; to a loving friend it is sufficient to intimate our necessities. Such ought to be the nature of our prayers, particularly in regard to health and other temporal blessings, for we do not know in such cases what is expedient for our salvation. Christ did not immediately go, but delayed two whole days, to exercise their faith and patience, and to render the miracle more notable. So He often acts with you; "the labor of the combat," says St. Gregory, "is prolonged, in order that the crown may be greater."

III. Some attempted to dissuade Christ from returning into Judea, to cure Lazarus, because the Jews had sought for him to stone him to death. "Then, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him." Such ought to be the zeal and courage of apostolical men: they ought to condemn every danger, and even life itself, when the good of souls and the glory of God are in question. You ought often to make such fervent acts as these, in order that if persecution rise against you, you may be able "to stand in the day of battle" (Ps. cxxxii. 9), and to say with St. Paul, "Neither do I count my life more precious than myself." (Acts xx. 24.)

**SATURDAY.****The Resuscitation of Lazarus.—II.**

I. When Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, "He groaned in the spirit, and humbled Himself, and He wept." (John xi. 33.) He acted in this manner from a principle of charity, "to weep with those that weep" (Rom. xii. 15), and to convince us that "we have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities. (Heb. iv. 15.) Then He said to them, "Take away the stone; and lifting up His eyes," He addressed a prayer to His eternal Father, to teach us that we ought to take away every impediment to our salvation, and always to implore the divine assistance when we undertake any serious work, particularly the conversion of sinners.

II. When the tombstone was removed, Jesus "cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth." Ponder the power and efficiency of that word, which even the dead obey. For "presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands, with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin." This man that lay four days in his grave is a perfect emblem of an inveterate sinner, bound and fettered with evil habits, as so many winding bands, pressed and kept down by the custom of sinning, as if he were in his grave, and finally shut up and enclosed by hardness of heart, as with a tombstone. Such sinners are almost incorrigible; hence Christ "cried out with a loud voice." He daily cries out to such, and is not heard. Fear the habit of sinning, for, as St. Augustine says, "He scarcely can rise who is borne down by sin."

III. The Pharisees having heard of this miraculous

resuscitation, "from that day they devised to put Him to death." Learn from this, that there is no action, however holy or virtuous, which is not a subject of envy or calumny with disaffected persons. Let us not be impatient with perverse people, nor disturbed at their opposition to what is good; but pray for them.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Christ a Worker of Miracles.

"Stand and consider the wondrous works of God." (Job. xxxvii. 14.)

I. "Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not." (John iv. 48.) Christ wrought many wonders, in order to confirm our faith; and hence He is foretold as the *wonderful*, by His prophet Isaias. (Is. ix. 6.) He never, however, appeared more wonderful than in the Eucharist, and in order to render this sacrament more dear to us, He has made it an abridgment of all of His other wonderful actions. In this "He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works; being a merciful and a gracious Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him." (Ps. cx. 4.)

II. Many miracles are contained in the sacrament of the Eucharist. 1. The substances of the bread and wine are entirely changed, when the priest has pronounced the words of Jesus Christ, "This is My body, this is My blood," and in place of these succeeds the same body of Christ, which is glorious in heaven and adored by the angels and saints. No change was ever so miraculous as this. 2. In regard to the *accidents* of bread and wine, they are preserved, and exist without their original sub-

ject; they are nevertheless active and nourish as if they were inherent in their own subject; and transcending all the powers of nature, they are the appearances, under which Christ, the author and bestower of grace, is conveyed to the soul. 3. As to the body of Christ, it is complete and entire in each host, and when the parts are separated, it is in each part of them; He is whole and entire in different places at the same time, indivisible, and equally sufficient for one and for many. Truly, "there was no such work made in any kingdom." (3 Kings x. 20.)

III. The necessary preparation for receiving this miraculous food, is *the fear of the Lord*. "He hath given food to them that fear Him." (Ps. cx. 5.) Now "He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing," (Eccles. vii. 19); therefore, take care that you neglect nothing to render yourself worthy of receiving Him.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIONS AND PARABLES OF THE REDEEMER.

### MONDAY.

#### The Rich Glutton and Lazarus.—I.

I. "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day." (Luke xvi. 19.) Observe the vices which follow in the train of riches, pride in dress, riot in feasting, and contempt of the poor. Divest yourself then of every desire of riches; "for they who would become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the Devil." (1 Tim. vi. 9.)

II. "The rich man died, and was buried in hell."

How wretched a termination of a life so agreeable! Such, however, is the general case of those whose riches are only employed in procuring pleasures. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (Job xxi. 13.) Ponder the torments of this once rich man; instead of purple and silk, he is invested with flames; instead of delicious fare, he is tormented with intolerable thirst; he who contemned the poor man is now, in his turn, contemned by him; he who denied the crumbs of his table, is now refused a drop of water. Thus God's punishments are proportionate to our offences. "The mighty," says the Wise Man, "shall be mightily tormented." (Wis. vi. 7.)

III. Consider the just judgments of God. The rich man is not heard in his torments, because he refused to be merciful to the poor during the short day of his prosperity. Therefore, when he begged for a drop of cold water, he was answered: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime." As if it were unlawful to receive good things here and there too. And so it is, "for they who will live piously in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) Do not therefore be too fond of prosperity in this life, lest you lose eternal happiness in the next. "For through many tribulations, we must enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 21.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Rich Glutton and Lazarus.—II.

I. "And there was a certain beggar, by name Lazarus." Christ condescended to mention the beggar's

name, and make it known to the end of the world; but the name of the rich man He passed over in silence. "Our Lord," says St. Gregory, "acknowledges and approves of the humble, but He does not know the proud." Learn, hence, to esteem uprightness more than worldly riches or splendor. "The memory of the just," says the Wise Man, "is with praises, but the memory of the wicked shall rot." (Prov. x. 7.)

II. The patience of this saintly poor man was very great. He was covered with sores, and he endured their pain without murmuring. He was extremely poor, "desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table." He was contemned and despised, "and no one did give him these crumbs." He was so miserable that he suffered the dogs "to lick his sores," or was perhaps too weak to drive them away. Who would prefer so miserable an object as this to the rich man, "who is clad in purple and feasts sumptuously every day?" Our Lord and Master, however, did so.

III. Lazarus died happily, for he was immediately "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Thus the tribulations of the just are short, but their reward is eternal. What joys, riches, and honors did not pain, poverty, and contempt procure for this beggar! "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them." (Num. xxiii. 10.) Ponder how different were the situations of the rich man and Lazarus after death; this difference was certainly greater than during their lives. The rich man was happy for a moment, but everlasting misery followed; Lazarus was wretched for a short time, but his wretchedness was followed by everlasting glory. Choose that which you would wish to be your portion; the choice is in your power now; it will not be so, long.

## WEDNESDAY.

## The Prodigal Son.—I.

I. "A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me." (Luke xv. 11.) God has two sons, the just and the wicked; the just are the elder, for "God made man right" (Eccles. vii. 30) in the beginning. The just always remain in God's house, and never wish to leave it, but the wicked estrange themselves from God, abuse the gifts both of nature and grace, and live *riotously* and perversely. Whoever leaves God, travels into a foreign land; he leaves "the way, the truth, and the life," and becomes a sinner. Of these David says, "Salvation is far from sinners." (Ps. cxviii. 155.)

II. As soon as this young prodigal had left his father's house he fell into misfortunes. "He began to be in want." Thus sinners who estrange themselves from the sacraments, from exhortation, and the company of the virtuous, soon begin to be in want of spiritual subsistence. "He joined himself to one of the citizens of that country," as a servant. Every sinner is a slave to the Devil; and as the citizen employed the prodigal youth in feeding swine, so the Devil employs his followers in gratifying their own sensual appetites, which brutalize human nature. The prodigal attempted to satisfy his hunger, by feeding on the husks of swine, but he did not succeed; neither can the sinner succeed in filling the capacity of his immortal soul by earthly gratifications.

III. "And returning to himself." When pressed by famine, he begins to recollect himself. "Vexation alone," says the Prophet to sinners, "shall make you un-



derstand." (Is. xxviii. 19.) Misfortune and distress make sinners feel how foolishly they have acted in leaving eternal things for such as quickly pass away. "How many hired servants in my father's house have plenty of bread, and I here perish with hunger!" Hence, he is moved to repentance; "I will arise," he says, "and will go to my father." How often have you followed this young prodigal in wandering from God! Follow his example in returning to your father.

#### THURSDAY.

### **The Prodigal Son.—II.**

I. "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion." (Luke xv. 20.) Thus Almighty God looks on sinners with eyes of mercy, whilst they are yet at a great distance from Him. He invites them by His exciting grace: "Return," he says, "O ye revolted children,—and I will bring you into Sion." (Jer. iii. 14.) This good father meets his revolted son on his return, and falling on his neck embraces him. "He put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." Thus God acts with returning sinners. "He enables their hands to do good works, and prevents their feet from being defiled by the ways of the world." O God, how is it possible that you should love man, who is formed of clay, in such a manner! He has a thousand times preferred the torments of hell to your service.

II. The elder brother, hearing of his father's joy and festivity, murmured through a spirit of envy. Ponder how easy it is, even among virtuous persons, to be

touched with a spirit of envy, when another is commended or preferred to them. Learn, hence, to be particularly on your guard against this bad spirit. You ought rather to wish with Moses, that all might praise and honor God in the most exalted manner. "O that all the people might prophesy, and the Lord would give them His spirit." (Num. xi. 29.)

III. The father answers mildly and endeavors to reclaim him from his error. "Son," he says, "thou art always with me, and all I have is thine." O what a happiness it is for the just to have God always with them! How rich must he be, who has every thing in common with God! Learn to rejoice, when your brother is brought back to Christ, and endeavor yourself to bring as many as you can to Him.

#### FRIDAY.

### **The Man that Fell among Thieves.—I.**

I. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers." (Luke x. 30.) In this parable the fall of mankind in Adam is represented. Man in his first creation was ordained to take the course of this life from Jericho; that is, from this sublunary world (for Jericho means the Moon) to the heavenly Jerusalem. He, however, has turned his affections from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fallen among thieves; that is, his spiritual enemies, who have robbed him of original justice; "and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead."

II. The Angelical Doctor enumerates four wounds, which human nature received in the fall of Adam. The

first is *ignorance*, which pervades the understanding and disturbs the order which it originally had in relation to truth. The second wound is *perverseness*, by which the will is disorganized in its pursuit of *good*. The third is *infirmity*, by which the energies of the soul are weakened in overcoming difficulties. The fourth wound is *passion*, by which the wishing power of the soul is disordered in the pursuit of happiness and pleasure. Observe how you are injured in the faculties of your soul, and have recourse to the pious Samaritan for a remedy. Say with the Prophet, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me, and I shall be saved." (Jer. xvii. 14.)

III. Neither the priests, nor the Levites of the ancient law, could afford any assistance to "this man, who was wounded." The good Samaritan alone, Christ Himself under the appearance of a sinner, "went up to him," by his Incarnation, "bound up his wounds," and from the precious vessels of His sacraments poured into his wounds "oil and wine." When Christ left this world and went to His Father, He recommended this man to the care of His successors, promising to reward them "at His return" to the earth, for the care and diligence which they might display towards him. What return will you make to the pious Samaritan for His affectionate conduct and solicitude for you?

## SATURDAY.

### The Man that Fell among Thieves.—II.

I. Contemplate in this parable your own fall and that of every other sinner. Those who go from Jerusalem to Jericho, that is, who turn their thoughts and affections

from heavenly things to those of this world, do certainly fall among thieves. Ponder how like this world is to Jericho; that is, to the moon. Nothing on earth is certain or constant, but always varying and decaying. How dangerous it is to travel in a road, in which we know that thieves are lurking. Such is our journey through life, "because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom to devour." (1 Pet. v. 8.)

II. Consider how the Devil treats those who surrender themselves to him, for he can injure no one who does not consent to be injured. He robs them of the ornaments of grace, he inflicts on them the desperate wounds of vicious habits, and leaves them half dead. When the *soul* of man is dead by sin, he cannot be said to be more than half alive, though he may enjoy perfect corporal health. Examine if you be in this state, and grieve that you have fallen into it so often. Take care that you never fall again into the hands of so cruel a tyrant.

III. Consider the great mercy of our Saviour, who approaches the sinner by His holy inspirations, particularly in the sacrament of the Eucharist, in order to bind up his wounds and cure the infirmities of his soul. "The Lord shall bind up the wound of His people, and shall heal the stroke of their wound." (Is. xxx. 26.) Who would not place confidence in such a physician? He pours wine and oil into the wound, to teach us how we ought to cure our neighbors, when they are wounded by sin. We must temper severity with mildness, so that in our corrections "there may be love without remissness, and vigor without harshness."

**TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.****Christ a Patient Creditor.**

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matt. 6. 12.)

I. Imagine yourself to be that servant, who in this day's gospel is said to have owed his master "ten thousand talents." (Matt. xviii. 24.) The debt, which a sinner owes to God for one mortal sin, is in a certain manner infinite. He is unable to pay this debt, and to make satisfaction for his sins, although he, and every thing which belongs to him, were sold, and himself reduced to perpetual slavery. What then would become of you, were your Lord to call you to an account this very day? You are charged with a great debt, and are unable to pay it.

II. God's goodness prompts Him to be willing to forgive even more than man can owe. He is "rich in mercy" (Ephes. ii. 4), "patient, and plenteous in mercy." (Ps. cxliv. 8.) "Come and accuse Me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow." (Joel, ii. 13, and Is. i. 18.) He will visit you to-day in the Eucharist, which He wishes to make a sanctuary or place of refuge for all His debtors, who cannot pay their debts. Hence David says, "The Lord is become a refuge for the poor." (Ps. ix. 10.) O how ought you to wish for the coming of your great and good creditor!

III. From this parable we learn what preparations are necessary for His coming—"I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest Me." Therefore, He is to be

entreated by earnest prayer. You must approach Him with the most profound humility; for “the servant falling down, besought Him.” You are to make a firm resolution of amendment. “Have patience with Me, and I will repay thee all.” You must forgive your brother, if you have any uncharitable feeling against him—“Should not thou, then, have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee? Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.” (Luke vi. 37.)

### MONDAY.

#### **The Laborers in the Vineyard.—I.**

I. “The kingdom of heaven is like to a master of a family who went out early in the morning to hire laborers.” (Matt. xx. 1.) This “master of a family” is God Himself, who, although He be the Lord of the kingdoms of heaven and earth, nevertheless provides in such a manner for the smallest wants of each individual, that it might seem that He is master only of a small family. His vineyard is the Church, the vines are all the faithful, the workmen are His pastors, and the faithful themselves; for every one must take care of his own soul. What a happiness it is to labor in such a vineyard, under such a master, and in cultivating such precious vines! Let this reflection induce you to labor seriously in performing your task in this vineyard.

II. Consider the solicitude of the master of the family. “He went out early in the morning to hire laborers.” From the very commencement of the world, in every age, God calls these workmen. He calls every one to Himself, from the first use of their reason. Although

many, nay, even the greatest part of mankind, resist His early call, He still continues to call in every stage of life afterwards, even to their last moment. Some He entices to His service by the hopes of reward, saying, "I will give you what is just." He rebukes others for their slothfulness: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" Examine if you have not been hitherto very idle in the service of God.

III. A part of this great vineyard consists of those whom God has placed under your charge, but particularly your own soul. Examine the present state of this part of the vineyard. See if it be not in the condition described by the author of Proverbs: "Behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down." (Prov. xxiv. 31.) Remember that you are sent into a vineyard, and not into a garden of pleasure; to labor, not to enjoy yourself and live at your ease. Encourage yourself to labor hard in this vineyard, for your reward will be very great. "The soul of them that work shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii. 4.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Laborers in the Vineyard.—II.

I. "When evening was come, the Lord of the vineyard said to His steward: Call the laborers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first." (Matt. xx. 8.) This steward is Christ our Lord, to whom the Father "hath given authority to execute judgment." (John v. 27.) The evening of our life is death, for the whole of our life is but one day. "A thousand years," says holy David, addressing his Lord, "in Thy sight are

as yesterday, which is past." (Ps. lxxxix. 4.) After death every man receives his hire or wages. In the distribution of rewards, not so much regard is paid to the time employed as to fervor in working. Hence, those who come into the vineyard at the last hour, by conversion, receive as much as the first, because they are generally accustomed to labor with greater fervor and humility, and deem themselves undeserving of any reward, whilst on the contrary the others are often too confident and presumptuous.

II. Those who had been longest in the vineyard, "murmured against the master of the house, saying, these last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and heats." There can of course be no murmuring in heaven, but the reward "of those who come last" will be so great that, if their state could permit, it would breed envy in those who came first. This kind of envy is unfortunately very common in this world. Examine yourself on the subject; see if *your eye* be not in some respect *evil*, because your brother is more favored than you are. Remember the expression of St. Paul, "Charity envieth not." (1 Cor. xiii. 4.)

III. The parable closes in these remarkable words, "So shall the last be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen." Those that were last employed in the vineyard receive the reward in consequence of their fervor. "God," says St. Gregory, "does not consider so much what is done as the affection with which it is done. Perhaps you may count many years in which you have been employed in the service of God, and not one in which you have served Him with fervor. Let it be said of you, 'In a short space he fulfilled a long time.'" (Wis. iv. 13.)



## WEDNESDAY.

**The Invitation to the Marriage Feast.—I.**

I. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a man being a king, who made a marriage for his son." (Matt. xxii. 2.) This king is our Heavenly Father, who has instituted a marriage between His only-begotten Son and human nature. The Son has espoused the Church in faith and charity, according to the expression of the Prophet, "I will espouse thee to Me in faith, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Osee. ii. 20.) This same Lord espouses the souls of all the faithful, not those of the noble and the great only, but those of every one who will not reject Him. Acknowledge, O my soul, your exalted dignity, and behave yourself in a manner worthy of your spouse.

II. Under various pretences, many who are called refuse to be present at the marriage feast, the various courses of which are the seven sacraments. Earthly cares prevent some: "I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it." Others say, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them." Others are too much attached to sensual pleasures to accept of the invitation: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Others, in fine, "laid hands on his servants" (who were sent to invite them) "and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death." (Matt. xxii. 6.) In these wicked and obstinate wretches are depicted those who contumeliously refuse to listen to the Apostles and their successors, and who, not content with this, take away their physical or moral lives by death or calumny.

III. Consider the madness and obstinacy of those men

who reject the banquet of this Heavenly King and adhere to vile and transitory pursuits, particularly when they reflect that, by acting otherwise, they may pass from the Church militant on earth to the triumphant Church in heaven. Take care that you yourself be not entangled in the snares of this world, lest you be shut out from the heavenly banquet. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." (Luke xiv. 15.) Aspire with all your soul to the enjoyment of this happiness.

#### THURSDAY.

#### **The Invitation to the Marriage Feast.—II.**

I. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame." (Luke xiv. 21.) The mercy of God is not diminished by the wretchedness or ingratitude of mankind. He provides other guests to take the places of those who were invited. Instead of the rich and voluptuous, who excuse themselves, He calls the poor and the feeble, that is, those who are free from earthly cares and impediments. He even compels them to enter, making use of afflictions and tribulations as so many scourges, by which He drives them into His banquet. Admire the mercies and goodness of God, and beg of Him with the Church, "to bend your rebellious will towards Himself."

II. "And the king went to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment." (Matt. xxii. 11.) This wedding garment is charity or the grace of God, without which no one must presume to approach the holy sacraments. Reflect how God

offers the garment of charity to every one. "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 4.) And men out of sloth often refuse. But on your part earnestly beg this grace of God, and do not presume to approach the sacraments without it.

III. Consider the indignation of the king against the man who presumed to be present at the marriage feast without the wedding garment. "Having bound his hands and feet," he thus commands his servants: "Cast him into exterior darkness." The punishment of the sinner is manifold. He is perpetually imprisoned in hell, he dwells in horrid darkness, since he is deprived of the sight of God; he is obstinate in evil, his hands are tied, so that he cannot perform a meritorious action, his feet are bound, so that he cannot escape from the place of his confinement. Besecch your Lord to deliver you from all these evils.

## FRIDAY.

### The Ten Virgins.—I.

I. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins." (Matt. xxv. 1.) In the Church militant there are both good and bad, wise and foolish, all expecting the coming of Christ the spouse of the Church, in order to celebrate His nuptials in heaven. Those that keep their faith without charity, which is the life of faith, are like the foolish virgins who had no oil in their lamps, What can be more unwise than to expect the coming of a judge who sees all things, and not to prepare against His coming? Examine whether you be guilty of this folly.

II. "And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The time during which *the bridegroom tarried* represents life, during which even the good sometimes slumber through venial carelessness. The wicked fall into a profound sleep, that is, into a total forgetfulness of God, and a complete spiritual lethargy. Take care not to slumber during the short space of life, lest you fall into a profound sleep. Listen to the words of the Apostle, who wishes to rouse Christians to a sense of their important duty. "Rise, thou that sleepest, and Christ will enlighten thee." (Eph. v. 14.)

III. "And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him!" (Matt. xxv. 6.) Your judge will come on a sudden, when you least expect him. Learn, therefore, to be always prepared for death. "The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night." (1 Thes. v. 2) If your temporal life were in danger, and you had reason to be afraid of thieves, you would not sleep; how, then, can you sleep when your eternal salvation is in danger? Often let the words sound in your ears, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," lest he come when you are not prepared to meet him. "Watch ye, therefore," says Christ, "because you know not the day nor the hour."

## SATURDAY.

### The Ten Virgins.—II.

I. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." (Matt. xxv. 7.) At the approach of death every one is generally alarmed and perplexed, but those who have not lived well, find no oil of charity in the lamp that

must light them to the other world, and they have no time to buy it with works of penance. "They shall return at evening," says royal David, "and they shall suffer hunger like dogs." (Ps. lviii. 7.) Then sinners will be denied that spiritual food which they neglected to receive during their lives. "Therefore, whilst we have time let us do good." (Gal. vi. 10.)

II. "Now, while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they who were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." (Matt. xxv. 10.) Ponder how important it is to be ready at the hour on which eternity depends. The wise virgins entered with joy and mutual congratulation; "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (Is. xxxv. 10.) The brightness of their lamp will be a hundred times increased from the light of the bridegroom's countenance. The flame of their sincere charity will blaze with extinguishable lustre during the whole long day of eternity. Who would not wish to spend that day in such company!

III. "But at last came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." They asked to be admitted by words, but their deeds did not entitle them to admittance. "For not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) Prepare, therefore, by works, and not by words only, for the coming of the bridegroom. Ponder the terrors comprehended in those words, "I know you not;" and take care that they be not addressed to you.

**TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER  
PENTECOST.**

**Christ the Teacher of Truth.**

“Direct me in Thy truth and teach me.” (Ps. xxiv. 5.)

I. Consider what is read in the gospel of to-day; “Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth.” (Matt. xxii. 16.) We are all surrounded with darkness in this life, and we stand in need of a sure preceptor, who may teach us the way of God in truth. The wise men of this world all err. “Thy prophets have seen false and foolish things for thee.” (Lam. ii. 14.) Men deceive and are deceived, and consequently no man can safely rely on them. Christ alone is of Himself infallibly true, and hence He says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” (John xiv. 6.) Hence, too, the Apostle says, “God is true, and every man a liar.” (Rom. iii. 4.)

II. Consider what was said to Saul, when he had wandered out of his way: “Behold, there is a man of God in this city, a famous man, all that he saith cometh certainly to pass. Now, therefore, let us go thither, perhaps he may tell us of our way, for which we are come.” (1 Kings, ix. 6.) Apply this to the holy Eucharist, which truly contains the man of God. God Himself is truly the man who will tell you of the way, for which you came into this world. Approach Him, therefore, with great confidence; for “whatever He speaketh doth certainly come to pass.”

III. In order to prepare yourself properly, you must imitate Saul and bring some present for this man of

God. "Behold," he says, "we will go, but what shall we carry to the man of God?" He was at that time poor, but he gave all that he had, "the fourth part of a sicle of silver." You also are poor, but you have a soul stamped with the image of God, "the light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us." (Ps. iv. 7.) Give, therefore, this soul of yours to Him, "whose image and superscription it bears;" but let it be purified from the filth of sin, and "made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29), to whose likeness it is made, and then "He will teach you all truth." (John xvi. 13.)

## MONDAY.

### The Talents.—I.

I. "A man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods." (Matt. xxv. 14.) God is the universal Lord of all things, and He distributes His goods among mankind; for whatever qualities of body or mind we possess, whatever we have, internal or external, natural or supernatural, all comes from God. O man, "what hast thou, that thou hast not received!" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) God distributes His talents or gifts, whether natural or supernatural, unequally; He gives more to one and less to another, but to all He addresses the words, "Trade till I come" (Luke xix. 13), in order that they may take advantage of what they receive. Examine how many talents you have received, in order that you may be the better able to give an account of them.

II. "He that had received the five talents went his

way, and traded with the same and gained other five." (Matt. xxv. 16.) "And in like manner, he that had received the two, gained other two." The industry of both was equal, though their talents were unequal, and therefore, in the same proportion, their rewards were equal. "God does not consider the greatness of the gain," says St. Jerome, "but good will and exertion." Although, therefore, you may imagine that you have received few talents in comparison to others, you may notwithstanding be equal to them in reward, if you equal them in the improvement of your stock.

III. The motive of reward ought to induce us to labor with great diligence and assiduity: "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And what is this joy? That which "the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) A joy without limit or measure, never to end or be abated.' Be therefore faithful over the little which God has intrusted to your care and conduct; employ everything which He has given you, to His glory, and thus you will deserve to be "placed over many things," and "to enter into the joy of the Lord."

## TUESDAY.

### The Talents.—II.

I. "But he that had received the one "talent" going his way, digged in the earth and hid his lord's money." (Matt. xxv. 18.) Thus many imagine that they cannot appear equal to others in virtue, knowledge or skill, and, falling into despair, surrender themselves at discretion to



the world, and become slothful and careless in the service of God. "The slothful hideth his hand under his armpit, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth." (Prov. xix. 24.) Such, however, are called fools by the Divine Spirit: "The fool foldeth his hands together, saying, Better is a handful with rest than both hands full with labor." (Eccles. iv. 5.) Examine your conduct on this subject.

II. Consider the excuse of the slothful servant: "Lord, I know that thou art a hard man,—and being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, here thou hast that which is thine." (Matt. xxv. 24.) He tells a falsehood, in order to excuse himself; for our Lord is not hard but a mild and merciful master. It is the custom of all slothful Christians, "to make excuses in sins." (Ps. cxl. 4.) They fancy to themselves that hardships and dangers exist, where there are none. "There is a lion in the way, and a lioness in the roads." (Prov. xxvi. 13.) Such tepid souls often say, "I cannot," when nothing but the will is wanting. Beware of tepidity and sloth as your greatest enemies.

III. Consider the sentence pronounced against this idle servant: "Take ye away, therefore, the talent from him, and the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "He is not condemned," observes St. Augustine, "because he lost his talent, but because he kept it without making any profit of it." Use every exertion therefore to employ those talents well, which God has intrusted to you. You cannot want employment for them, whatever be your state or calling in life. Your own spiritual good, the glory of God, and the advantage of your neighbor ought to be always before your eyes.

**WEDNESDAY.****The Vineyard Let Out to Husbandmen.—I.**

I. "There was a certain master of a family, who planted a vineyard and made a hedge round about it." (Matt. xxi. 23, Mark xii.) God has planted a vineyard, which is His universal Church, and has bestowed great care on it. In the first place, He has "made a hedge round about it," by fencing it with excellent laws and precepts, by placing it under the protection of His angels, who defend it against the incursions of the Devil. Secondly, He has "dug in it a wine press," by instituting the sacraments, which derive their efficacy from Christ's precious blood, that continually flows for our sins. Thirdly, He has "built a tower;" that is, His Divine Providence is always employed in defending it from evil, and in providing it with every good thing which is necessary. How happy is it to be placed in such a vineyard under such a guardian!

II. Having thus arranged his vineyard, "the master of a family," "let it out to husbandmen;" that is, to all mankind, in order that each one might labor in it according to his state and calling. After he had done this, "he went into a strange country." God seems to be absent from us, and to leave us to ourselves, in order that we may act from the impulse of free will. Although He can have whatever good act He wishes from His creatures, whenever He wishes, yet He waits with patience. Who would not admire and love so much goodness and mercy!

III. Almighty God, to put these husbandmen in mind

of their duty, sent them, from time to time, patriarchs, prophets and priests, but all in vain. He sent them, in the last place, His only Son, but they murdered Him. With reason then does He exclaim by the mouth of the Prophet: "What is there, that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 4.) With reason then is it said, "He will bring those evil men to an evil end." (Matt. xxi. 41.) Take care that the weight of this sentence do not fall on you and yield fruit corresponding to your tenure in the vineyard of our Lord.

#### THURSDAY.

#### The Vineyard Let Out to Husbandmen.—II.

I. In regard to God, this vineyard is the soul of each individual, and yours in particular. This vineyard the Supreme *Master of the family* has furnished with a *press and a tower*, and He has surrounded it with a hedge: that is, He has done every thing which is requisite on His part to secure your soul's salvation, and to make it produce every fruit of virtue. You are, in the language of the Prophet, "a chosen vineyard." (Jer. ii. 21.) And of you God may say, "What is there, that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 4.)

II. God *lets out* this vineyard of your soul to yourself; for He himself is the absolute proprietor of it. "All souls," He says, "are mine" (Ez. xviii. 4), and "I am the Lord, and there is none else." (Is. xlv. 5.) He therefore wishes that you should cultivate your own soul like a good husbandman, and render it fruitful in His service; for "who planteth a vine and eateth not of the fruit

thereof?" (1 Cor. ix. 7.) Hence Almighty God expects fruit from you. He goes into a foreign country and seems to be absent from you, because He wishes you to exercise your own free will. But woe to that vine which does not produce fruit during His apparent absence!

III. God often sends to you His servants, viz., preachers, superiors, and others, to put you in mind of your duty. He sends also His only begotten Son by interior inspirations and the example of His life and passion. Take care, therefore, that you do not, like the wicked husbandmen in the gospel, condemn God's officers, or murder His Son again by sin, lest the kingdom of God be taken from you and given to another, "that shall render Him the fruit in due season." (Matt. xxi. 41.)

## FRIDAY.

### The Wicked Steward.

I. "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods." (Luke xvi. 1.) God is designated under this certain rich man; for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." (Ps. xxiii. 1.) You are the steward to whom God has intrusted many goods, both of soul and body, natural and supernatural. His object was that you might use these goods well; but, by your mismanagement and misadministration, you have deserved to be accused before your employer of having "wasted his goods." What a disgrace it is to misemploy the treasures of God, and to become a bankrupt to heaven!

II. The rich man said to his steward, "Give an account of thy stewardship." When God calls you from this world, you will be obliged to render a strict and

severe account of *your* stewardship. After that moment you cannot imitate the unjust steward any longer, for of the period succeeding this moment it is said, "the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix. 4.) Do good, therefore, whilst you possess the time. Wise and prudent stewards frequently examine their accounts in order to correct any error and be always prepared to settle their accounts. Imitate them by a daily rigorous examination of conscience; for "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi. 31.)

III. This steward acted wisely for himself, though deceitfully in relation to his master, and Christ commends his prudence, though He condemned his fraudulent action. Would to God that we were as prudent in regard to our salvation! Lament that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Exert yourself for the salvation of your own soul; for "there is a wise man who is wise to his own soul." (Ecclus. xxxvii. 25.)

## SATURDAY.

### Wise and Foolish Men.

I. Christ pronounces him to be a wise man who lays the foundation of his house on a firm rock (Matt. vii.); for it will firmly resist the storms, the floods, and the tempests. In our regard, *this rock is Christ*; the storms, the floods, and the tempests are the temptations by which we are assailed. *He* builds his house on a rock who grounds his life and actions on the example of Christ and motives drawn from eternity, and by that means overcomes all temptations. "God is in the midst thereof; it shall not be moved." (Ps. xlv. 6.)

II. Christ pronounces him to be a foolish man who builds his house on sand, for what can be greater folly than to incur the expense of raising an edifice which the first storm may overthrow. By the *sand* are represented all earthly things, and *he* builds on sand who places all his thoughts and affections on the transitory things of this life. A man of this character is tossed to and fro by the winds of vanity, swallowed up by the floods of pleasure, and completely overthrown by the tempests of adversity. Hence, the Prophet compares the wicked to "the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth." (Ps. i. 4.)

III. All mankind scorn the name of "a foolish man," but there are few who do not act consistently with this character. Hence the wisest of men observes that "the number of fools is infinite" (Eccles. i. 15), because most men build upon sand. Examine if it be not your case; and remember that as both these houses were attacked by storms and tempests, so temptations equally attack the virtuous and the wicked; and if you ever yield to temptation, do not ascribe your fall to the temptation, but to the sandy foundation on which your spiritual edifice is built.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

### Christ the Salvation of Your Soul.

"Attend to my life, O Lord, the God of my salvation." (Ps. xxxvii. 23.)

I. Christ is recorded in the gospel of to-day to have restored to life the daughter of a ruler of the synagogue, and to have cured a woman of the bloody flux. (Matt. ix. 18; Mark v. 22; Luke viii. 41.) Lastly, He bestowed

perfect health on those who approach Him, "for virtue went out from Him and healed all." (Luke vi. 19.) Hence royal David exclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Ps. xxvi. 1.) How securely is he protected, whose saviour and defender is God Himself!

II. This same God will visit you to-day in the Eucharist. O, what a happiness is this! Examine your soul accurately, and discover what are your spiritual infirmities, and in what attacks against you your enemy oftenest succeeds. If you do not find that your soul is dead in the sight of God, by mortal sin, perhaps you may find, that it is dying by the lingering consumption of tepidity. Have, therefore, recourse to the Lord, your Saviour, in order that He may say to you, "I am thy salvation." (Ps. xxxvi. 3.)

III. To prepare yourself for Christ's visit, you must imitate the humility of the ruler, "who came and adored Him," and of the woman who "came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment." (Matt. ix. 18, 20.) You must place great confidence in your visitor; for, in consequence of this virtue, Christ said to the woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Consistently with this spirit of confidence, the Prophet says: "Thy life shall be saved for thee, because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxix. 18.)

## MONDAY.

### The Sower.

I. "A sower went out to sow his seed." (Luke viii. 5.) Ponder the infinite mercy of God; He does not stand in need of any fruit, which we can yield Him, and yet He

condescends by various ways, by preachers, by good books, by holy inspirations, by superiors and directors, and by the influence of good example, to *go forth* and sow in our hearts the seed of eternal salvation. Reflect how precious must be that seed whose fruit is everlasting life.

II. The earth on which this seed is sown is the heart of man; but there are three kinds of soil, in which this seed produces no fruit: 1. In the highway; that is, in a heart which is continually exposed to distracting thoughts. 2. In a stony soil; that is, in a hard heart, in which there is no moisture of devotion. 3. In a field full of thorns and briars; that is, in a heart which is overrun with the cares, and pleasures, and desires of earthly riches. Examine your heart on these subjects, and see if it be in a fit condition to receive the seed of eternal life.

III. It is the property of the good soil, to "keep the seed and bring forth fruit in patience." (Luke viii. 15.) It is not sufficient to receive holy inspirations; you must endeavor to retain them; "for whosoever," writes St. Gregory, "is unable to retain his food is in a desperate situation." The field of your heart must be patient; that is, it must willingly bear the plough of affliction, and wait for the dews of Heaven and the showers of divine grace. "In your patience, you shall possess your souls." (Luke xxi. 19.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Cockle.

I. "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field." (Matt. xiii. 24.) By



Christ's own exposition, the sower in this parable is God; the field, the world; the good seed, the just; the cockle, the wicked; the enemy, the world; and the angels, the reapers. God, on His part, wishes all men to be virtuous, and, with this good intention, gives His good seed; but whilst men are asleep, and careless in the affairs of salvation, the devil sows cockle among the good grain;—thus some men become wicked. The cockle grows up with the good grain, and sometimes is hardly distinguishable from it; during this life, the wicked are often scarcely known from the good. Examine whether you be wheat or cockle, and do not sleep or be careless in your salvation, for fear of receiving injury from your enemy.

II. The just even are sometimes indiscreet, when they wish the wicked to be destroyed at once. "Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up." God, however, acts in a different manner, "He makes the sun to rise upon the good and the bad." (Matt. v. 45.) He waits with patience for the conversion of the wicked, and therefore does not wish them immediately to be gathered up. Imitate God in this patient forbearance in regard to your brethren, whose conduct displeases or disedifies you.

III. How differently this world terminates in regard to the good and the wicked. "Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles, to burn, but gather the wheat into My barn." Would you wish to be cockle or wheat? If you prefer to be wheat, suffer yourself to be purified by afflictions sent from God, and, by voluntary mortification, from all chaff, and separated from the cockle, for "nothing defiled can enter heaven." (Apoc. xxi. 27.)

**WEDNESDAY.****The Mustard Seed.**

I. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." (Matt. xiii. 31.) A mustard seed is small and not remarkable either for its smell or outward appearance, but it contains within itself great natural heat, and manifests it, particularly when it is bruised. Thus, Christ in outward appearance was "a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi. 7.) Nevertheless He is possessed of all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 3.) When He was bruised and buffeted, and suspended on His cross, He expressed and manifested the most unparalleled charity for mankind. Do you on your part suffer yourself to be inflamed with emanations of love, from this divine source.

II. In this world the just bear a resemblance to the mustard seed. They are simple and contemptible in the eyes of the world, but they are high in the estimation of God and His angels. Of them, the wicked will say at the day of judgment: "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God." (Wis. v. 4.) Observe also that good men display their virtue most, when they are under the pressure of afflictions. Hence the Apostle writes, "When I am weak, I am powerful." (2 Cor. xii. 10.)

III. When the mustard seed is sown, it grows into a large tree, "so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof." Thus, Christ was perfectly mortified and dead on the cross, and in His branches,

that is, in His doctrine and example, devout souls dwell by holy contemplation. "I sat down," says the spouse in the Canticle, "under His shadow whom I desired and His fruit was sweet to my palate." (Cant. ii. 3.)

## THURSDAY.

### The Leaven.

I. "The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal." (Matt. xiii. 33.) This leaven in the first place is Christ, who, concealing Himself in our nature, rendered the whole mass, which had been cursed in consequence of the sin of our first parents, acceptable to God. He is again in a special manner this leaven in the holy Eucharist, for by it He penetrates into the human heart: and thus in a certain manner transforms the whole man, giving chastity to the body, and the fervor of every virtue to the soul.

II. All good men are leaven, whether they live in communities or in the world, for an exemplary life has a wonderful influence on men's actions, and secretly urges to imitation, making those who imitate, like their models. Hence, St. Paul says to his disciple: "Be thou an example of the faithful in conversation and charity." (Tim. iv. 13.) Because, as St. Leo writes, "Examples are more powerful than words, and it is a more perfect manner to teach by actions, than by words."

III. The influence of evil example or bad leaven is very great. "Know you not," writes St. Paul, "that a little leaven corrupts the whole mass?" (1 Cor. v. 6.) Thus our bad example infects those, with whom we live and converse; hence we ought to be very cautious, lest we make the sins of others our own; for this is the case,

when our bad example is followed. Examine yourself, therefore, most seriously, and see whether you are accustomed to give bad example of any kind; for "woe to that man, by whom scandal cometh." (Matt. xviii. 7.)

## FRIDAY.

**The Treasure Hidden in a Field.**

I. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hidden in a field." (Matt. xiii. 44.) This treasure, says St. Gregory, is the desire of heaven, or the love of virtue and heavenly things, and it is said to be *hidden* in the field of this world, because all do not know its value. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones." (Matt. xi. 25.) Hence most men abhor poverty and humility, and consider them as curses. Entreat our Lord to open your eyes, that you may be able to discover this treasure.

II. Consider how this treasure is to be kept, "which when a man hath found, he hideth." We must conceal this treasure in our hearts, and cover it with the veil of humility, lest the praises of men or vain glory deprive us of it. Examine whether this be your conduct, or whether you do not rather on all occasions boast of the merits which you think you possess. Our road to heaven is infested with many thieves, "and he wishes to be robbed," observes St. Gregory, "who carries his treasure in open view on the road." Hide it, therefore, as much as you can, in order that you may preserve it.

III. This treasure can only be purchased by the sale not of one or more things, but of all that we have. "He goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Christ in another place pronounces, "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be

My disciple." (Luke xiv. 33.) We must, therefore, leave all things in this world, at least in affection, to attain the perfect enjoyment of Christ, and we must consider that we have made a good exchange, for we gain a hundred fold, a hundred times over what we have left.

## SATURDAY.

### The Pearl.

I. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls." (Matt. xiii. 45.) We are all merchants so long as we live in this world; hence, Christ in the parable of the talents said, "Trade till I come." (Luke xix. 13.) All men are in quest of pearls; that is, of the means of happiness; some place their happiness in temporal enjoyments, others in learning and science, and others in honors. They are, however, all mistaken; all these are false pearls; they have nothing to recommend them but their outward show. Hence the Apostle addresses the rich: "Your riches are putrefied, your gold and silver are rusted." (James v. 2.) Examine whether you be not employed in seeking such kind of pearls.

II. "When he had found one pearl of great value, he sold all that he had, and bought it." There is only one true and really valuable pearl, that is, Christ our Lord and the love of eternal things. "All gold in comparison to her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay." (Wisdom, vii. 9.) There is no comparison between time and eternity, heaven and earth, nor is there any between Christ and all earthly goods whatever, and yet as often as you sin you prefer some temporal gratification to Christ.

III. Here we are told again that this precious pearl is

not to be bought but by the sale of every thing else. "He went his way, and sold all that he had and bought it." "Happy is the man," says St. Gregory, "who with all his fortunes is able to purchase Christ." Hence, St. Paul writes: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dying, that I may gain Christ." (Phil. iii. 8.) Examine your conduct in this respect.

#### **TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.**

When the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost comes before November, take the Meditation of the Third Sunday after Epiphany on page 128.

#### **MONDAY.**

#### **The Lost Sheep.**

I. "What man among you that hath a hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost?" (Luke xv. 4.) This man is Christ, the sheep are the faithful. Christ performs to the full extent all the offices of a good shepherd. He came down from heaven to feed them; He marks them for His own, with a divine and indelible character; He leads them by His example to all virtue; He cures their infirmities; He defends them from the wolves of hell; He provides them with the rich pastures of His doctrine and sacraments, and finally He gives them His own body and blood for their food and nourishment. The faithful hear His voice, obey His commands and follow Him wherever He leads the way; they delight in His pastures and surrender themselves entirely to Him: living and dying they are His.

II. The strayed sheep is a sinner, who leaving the society of the just, and disobeying the commands of the Shepherd, wanders wherever he pleases. He is a most foolish and wretched man, he does not understand the happiness, which he enjoyed under the Good Pastor; he is indifferent to the spiritual food which he once received; he prefers such as is pleasing to flesh and blood; he does not hear nor follow the call of the Shepherd; he considers the ways of mortification and the cross too hard and difficult, and prefers to wander through devious and dangerous paths of his own will, amidst rocks and precipices. "All we, like sheep," says the Prophet, "have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way." (Is. liii. 6.) Reflect how often you have done so.

III. The goodness of the Shepherd induces him to seek for His strayed sheep. He sought them Himself in the first place, by His exemplary life and doctrine, during the thirty-three years, in which "He conversed with men." He now continually seeks them by holy inspirations, directors, pious books, and by the whole economy of His infallible Church. When He has found His lost sheep, He kindly and affectionately conducts it back again to His fold. O Lord, thus receive me, and conduct me into Thy sacred fold. "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost, seek Thy servant because I have not forgotten Thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii. 179.)

## TUESDAY.

### The Pharisee and the Publican.

I. "Two men went up into the Temple to pray." (Luke xviii. 10.) Ponder the pride of the Pharisee. Be-

cause he conceived himself perfect, he prays for no favor from God, neither for the forgiveness of his sins, nor an increase of grace. Under the pretence of giving thanks to God, he commends himself for his own good works, and arrogantly prefers himself to others. Not content with this he contemns the publican, whom he rashly judges a sinner. Thus all proud men are blind and say to themselves, "I am rich and made wealthy;" but alas! "thou knowest" not, proud soul, "that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Apoc. iii. 19.)

II. The publican, on the other hand, expresses the greatest degree of humility. He stands at a distance, and does not deem himself worthy of appearing in the sight of God, or even of the Pharisee. He does not dare to lift up his eyes to Heaven, from confusion for his sins. He strikes his breast with a contrite and humble heart, and wishes to make satisfaction for his transgressions. He begs pardon for his sins and humbly prays, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." Such ought to be your prayers; humble, contrite, and accompanied with a firm purpose of amendment.

III. Consider the sentence, which Christ pronounced on these two men: "This man (the publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other." If pride destroyed all the good works of the Pharisee, so on the other side, did humility, accompanied with penance, blot out the sins of the publican: "Because every one, that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xviii. 14.) This is frequently the case here, but it is always so in the next life. Choose then whether you would rather be humbled in this short and uncertain world, or in the eternal world to come.



WEDNESDAY.

**The Faithful and Wise Steward.**

I. "Who, thinkest thou, is the faithful and wise steward!" (Luke xii. 42.) Christ finds few of this character, and therefore He speaks in the style of wonder. He requires of His servants that they be faithful, prudent, charitable to others, and persevering in good works, in order that when the hour of death comes He may find them "so doing." Examine how you conduct yourself as His steward, and whether you engage yourself in the cause of God with fidelity and perseverance, or whether you seek in it your own interest and satisfaction rather than the glory of God; whether you perform your actions with proper deliberation and circumspection; whether you attempt to render your means and talents conducive to the benefit of others; and finally, whether you persevere in doing good.

II. The wicked servant says to himself, "My Lord is long a coming." And therefore he imagines, that he has a long time to live; he acts like the unwise man in the Gospel, who said, "I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years." (Luke xii. 19.) He injures and insults his fellow servants, "he shall begin to strike the men-servants and the maid-servants." He surrenders himself to sensuality, for he begins "to eat and to drink and be drunk." Resolve to avoid all these vices, and recollect that they draw their existence from the persuasion of enjoying a long life and a forgetfulness of our last end.

III. The reward and punishment of these different servants. Of the former it is said, "Blessed is that servant; he will place him over all that he possesseth." But the fate

of the latter will be far different: The Lord of that servant will come in a day he expecteth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers." Imitate, therefore, the good and faithful steward in order that you may not be punished with the wicked servant.

# THURSDAY.

## The Girding of the Loins.

I. "Let your loins be girded, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their Lord when He shall return from the wedding." (Luke xii. 35.) Diligent and attentive servants carefully watch for the arrival of their masters. Such diligence and attention Christ requires from us. "We gird our loins," says St. Gregory, "when we restrain luxury by continence, and we hold burning lamps in our hands when by good works we show our neighbors the light of our example." Examine how you perform this double duty.

II. The good servants are thus attentive in order "that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately." (Luke xii. 36.) "Our Lord comes to us," says St. Gregory, "when He hastens to judge us at our death; He knocks when He sends us sickness, the forerunner of dissolution." On this occasion, the good with joy "open to Him, having a desire," as the Apostle says, "to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil i. 23.) On the contrary, with what an unwilling heart do the wicked let Him in when He knocks! Hence, the author of Ecclesiasticus exclaims, "O death, how bitter is the remem-

branch of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions." (Ecclus. xli. 1.)

III. "If a master of a family did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open." (Luke xii. 39.) Death will certainly come as a thief and break open the soul's habitation, which is the body; but the day and hour are uncertain. Hence, God wishes us to be on our guard every day of our lives, in order that we may not be surprised at the moment when our eternal doom is to be fixed.

## FRIDAY.

### The Vine and Its Branches.

I. "I am the vine and you are the branches." (John xv. 5.) Christ is a true vine, both in regard to the most precious wine which He poured forth on the cross, and in as much as His blood is daily presented to His Father for us, in the chalice of salvation. Every one may be a branch of this vine; hence, He invites all. Of this vine it is said by the Psalmist, "It stretched forth its branches unto the sea, and its boughs unto the river." (Ps. lxxix. 12.) Every branch and every bough that belong to this vine are kept alive by the influence of grace derived from the parent stock, which is Christ, and these branches bear fruit because they are thus connected with it. How happy are you if you be a branch of this sacred vine.

II. Fruitfulness is an evident sign that you are connected with this tree. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." (John xv. 5.) Hence you may discover by the fruit which you bear, whether

or not you belong to this vine. Besides, "every branch which beareth fruit He will purge that it may bring forth more fruit." (John xv. 2.) The husbandman improves or *purges* the vine by pruning and incision; so does God act in regard to His friends by sending them afflictions and by suffering them to be tempted. Learn hence to receive these trials willingly from the hands of God, as so many helps to your advancement in virtue.

III. The branches which bear no fruit "shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire." (John xv. 6.) "The branch," says St. Augustine, "must either bear fruit or be cast into the fire." Take care, therefore, to bring forth fruit in due season; let the grapes be genuine and not sour grapes, lest, like a dry withered bough, you be cut off and cast into the fire which will burn forever.

## SATURDAY.

### The Barren Fig-Tree.

I, "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none." (Luke xiii. 6.) This *fig-tree* represents every Christian planted by God's own hand in the *vineyard* of His Church, to bring forth the fruit of good works. God wishes this tree to grow and produce fruit, and to gain this object He leaves nothing undone on His part; He warms it with the sun of faith, and waters it with the streams of His divine grace. He even forces it in some manner to produce fruit by every attention on His part. But if, after all His exertions, it will not produce fruit, He orders it to be cut down, for "every tree that yield-

eth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii. 10.)

II. Apply this parable to yourself and to your own soul. The Heavenly Husbandman has planted you as a choice vine in the vineyard of His Church. He has exposed you to the sun of divine enlightenments, and watered you with the stream of His grace. He has provided you, in fine, with everything necessary to produce plenty of excellent fruit. He may perhaps, however, justly say of you: "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none;" that is, I find no fruit corresponding to my anxious exertions for the tree. What then must be done?

III. "Let it alone this year, also." Who knows whether God has determined that this shall be the last year of your mortal life, or that if you do not during this year yield the fruit which He wishes He will withdraw His more abundant graces from you, and not afford you so many helps as He has done of working out your salvation. "I gave her time to do penance," He says in the Apocalypse (ii. 21), but we abuse that time. He re-sents our carelessness and closes His hand; then "time shall be no more." (Apoc. x. 6.) The same helps which we formerly enjoyed will no longer be in our possession; and though we *can*, we *shall not* secure our last end. Make, therefore, good use of the present time, for the night of death *cometh*, during which "no man can work." (John ix. 4.)

THE END.